

PD Partner Model Implementation Guide

Developed for government funded language training providers in Ontario



Funded by:



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

Developed by:



Toronto Catholic District School Board

This guide supplements “Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice, An Instructor Handbook”.
Both documents are available on www.tutela.ca and <http://wiki.settlementatwork.org/wiki/>

Acknowledgements

Project manager
Anne-Marie Kaskens

Manager, budget and operations
Sharon Rajabi

Principal writers
Anne-Marie Kaskens, Colette Peters

Contributing writers
Sara Gnida, Anne Hajer, Ada Purcarin

Expert reviewer
Antonella Valeo

A special thank-you is extended to Hanna Cabaj for her continued leadership and support in the development of this publication, and to the following individuals for their professional guidance and time:

Advisory committee
Hanna Cabaj
Sheila Carson
Wanda Komorowski
Bobbi MacDougall
Jennifer McKay
Sheila McMullin
Kathryn Rumble
Sondra Sieminski
Christopher Sloan

Table of Contents

Introduction to the PD Partner Model Implementation Guide	3
---	---

Chapter 1: Implementing the PD Partner Model

Introduction.....	6
Implementation Processes and Documents	10
▶ Arranging Information Sessions.....	11
▶ Presenting Information Sessions	15
▶ Promoting the PD Partner Opportunity	18
▶ Participating in PD Partnerships	22
▶ Reporting on PD Partnerships	26
▶ Evaluating the PD Partner Model	31

Chapter 2: Becoming a PD Partner

Introduction.....	34
The PD Partner Training Course.....	35
▶ Mini-Guide: PD Partner Communication Strategies	39

Chapter 3: Sharing Our Research

Introduction.....	55
PD and LINC and Adult ESL Instructors: What We Know from Research	56
Job-Embedded PD as a Promising Practice.....	61
Job-Embedded PD in LINC and Adult ESL Programs	64
Case Studies of JEPD Initiatives	74
References.....	86

Introduction to the PD Partner Model Implementation Guide

The PD Partner Implementation Guide is for LINC and adult ESL language training providers interested in implementing the PD Partner model.

The PD Partner¹ model is a form of peer coaching developed by the Adult Education Program of the Toronto Catholic District School Board. It was originally developed for LINC language training providers in Ontario through two-year funding² provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The implementation processes described in this guide were used during the funding period by 24 LINC language training providers across Ontario. They are offered here for the benefit of language training providers who would like to use or adapt them.

This guide includes three chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Implementing the PD Partner Model**

This chapter is helpful for language training providers interested in implementing a form of the PD Partner model. It includes a description of the processes and documents that can be used or adapted to implement the PD Partner model.

- **Chapter 2: Becoming a PD Partner**

This chapter is helpful for language training providers interested in using some of the material contained in the PD Partner training course, in order to develop similar training. It includes a brief description of the PD Partner training course³, a list of the materials used during the course, and a summary of the communication strategies to which PD Partners are introduced in the course.

- **Chapter 3: Sharing Our Research**

This chapter is helpful for those interested in the research that supports the PD Partner model. It includes findings from the research that informed the development of the PD Partner model.

Origins of the PD Partner Model

The PD Partner model draws on research, principles and practices in peer coaching, reflective practice, action research and job-embedded professional development. It originated from the recognition that:

- Ongoing professional development is integral to effective instruction.
- Existing forms of PD offered to LINC and Adult ESL instructors should be complemented by opportunities that facilitate the connection and application of research and knowledge to daily classroom practice.
- The research literature indicates that there are significant benefits to job-embedded professional development, reflective practice, peer coaching and action research.

¹ TCDSB would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of Colleen Boehmer and Rosemary Wehrle, Saint Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education Centres in Kitchener-Waterloo, who created the term “PD Partner” for a PD initiative in 2009. The term “PD Partner” best captured the collaborative, non-expert spirit of the PD Partner model.

² April 2011–March 2013.

³ The PD Partner training course was developed and offered during the 2011-2013 funding period.

Guiding Principles

The broad goal of the PD Partner model is to engage instructors in the examination and evaluation of professional knowledge, and its application to classroom practice, in order to facilitate improved outcomes for language learners. Five principles guided its development:

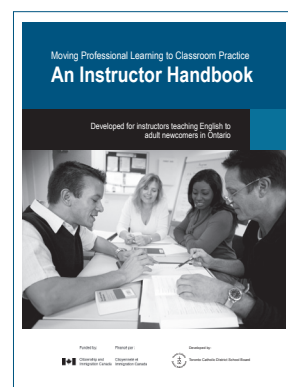
1. The model is that of classroom-based job-embedded professional development, where learning is relevant to and integrated into an instructor's own teaching practice.
2. The components and products of the PD Partner model (i.e., the *Instructor Handbook*, the *PD Partner Model Implementation Guide*, The PD Partner training course, and PD partnerships between instructors and PD Partners) reflect Ontario-adopted standards in government-funded language training programs.
3. The PD Partner model includes opportunities for instructors to evaluate instructional strategies through experimentation in their classes and a focus on the evidence provided by learners.
4. The PD Partner model views instructors as the local experts in their own classrooms. To this end, findings from SLA and TESL research are presented as provisional and subject to evaluation by instructors in light of their local context and experience.
5. The PD Partner model includes an evaluative component to inform improvements to the model.

The Components of the PD Partner Model

Four components of the PD Partner model were developed and implemented through the 2011–2013 funding period, and are described below.

1) Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: An Instructor Handbook

This publication was developed to help LINC and adult ESL instructors apply professional learning to day-to-day teaching, and to support the implementation of the PD Partner model. It presents a practical approach to examining teaching in light of the impact it has on learners. It can be used by instructors on their own, or in partnerships with colleagues.



2) The PD Partner Training Course

The PD Partner training certificate course was developed and delivered to LINC instructors from 24 Ontario language training providers. The course is accredited by TESL Ontario as Post TESL Certificate Training for qualified instructors. A summary of the course content and materials is provided in Chapter 2 of this guide.

3) The PD Partner Implementation Guide

The PD Partner Implementation Guide (this document) shares research findings and implementation procedures with language training providers.

4) PD Partnerships

PD partnerships involve trained PD Partners forming short-term partnerships with instructors in order to support their professional development.

Chapter 1

Implementing the PD Partner Model



Introduction

This chapter is for LINC and adult ESL language training providers interested in implementing the PD Partner model. It includes implementation procedures and related customizable documents.

The PD Partner

A PD Partner offers collaborative, job-embedded professional development (JEPD) support to language training instructors. He/she is a trained staff person who is available to visit instructors in their classrooms to offer peer support that is focused on exploring a particular aspect of classroom practice selected by the instructor.

PD Partnerships

PD Partners form short-term partnerships with instructors that focus on a specific goal that involves applying professional learning to classroom practice. The partnership typically involves three to five classroom visits. To support professional learning, a PD Partner may brainstorm or reflect with an instructor, provide evidence-based resources relevant to his/her topic of interest, or assist in trying out a new instructional strategy.

See page 24 for the characteristics of effective collaboration in a PD partnership.

The Reflective Method

As PD Partners engage in partnerships with instructors, they follow a six-step Reflective Method (outlined on pages 8–9) page for exploring a topic of instructional practice.

The Reflective Method is rooted in reflective practice, which in its broadest sense refers to reflecting on the effectiveness of one's teaching in order to enhance it. Through a methodical reflection on teaching and its effect on learners, reflective practice can lead to increased confidence about instructional decisions, further engagement with teaching practice, professional growth, and enhanced satisfaction with teaching (Farrell, 2007, 2011; Gallup Rodriguez & McKay, 2010; Richards & Farrell, 2005). The model outlined in the Reflective Method can help instructors apply professional learning in a way that is relevant to their classrooms and focused on improving learner outcomes.

PD Partnerships: Six Key Features

PD Partners form short-term partnerships with willing instructors that focus on a specific goal that involves professional learning and its application to classroom practice.

① PD partnerships are voluntary.

Participation by instructors is voluntary. The goal is to support the instructor in his/her own professional learning. In this model, the instructor *elects* to participate and identifies the topic of exploration for professional learning. Although the PD Partner informs *all* instructors about the PD Partnership opportunity, he/she only partners with instructors who choose to participate.

② PD partnerships are job-embedded.

The PD Partner and participating instructor meet at the instructional site, often in the classroom, during working hours. The topic of exploration is directly relevant to instruction with a particular group of learners.

③ The topic of professional learning is identified by the instructor.

Because the aim of the PD partnership is professional learning and the application of learning to the classroom, it is important that the topic be identified by the instructor and be relevant and specific to his/her interests, classroom context and needs. However, in some cases an employer may decide to identify a broad topical category for PD partnerships (e.g., CLB, assessment). Even then, it is still the instructor who elects to participate and identifies a particular topic or focus within the broader category.

④ The PD Partner takes a collaborative, non-expert role.

Although the PD Partner is knowledgeable about a collaborative, reflective approach to professional learning and key concepts underlying the CLB, he/she is not necessarily an expert in particular areas of instruction. Rather, the PD Partner is there to offer support and collaboration as the instructor explores a topic. For example, a PD Partner could be:

- A partner with whom to set goals, brainstorm or discuss approaches to classroom challenges
- A second pair of hands to search for relevant, evidence-based instructional strategies
- A partner with whom to try out an alternative technique in the class
- A second pair of eyes to observe the impact of the instructional techniques on learners (although it is not required that a PD Partner observe a class)

⑤ PD partnerships follow a goal-directed, reflective cycle.

The partnerships are goal-directed and follow a six-step reflective process (summarized in the diagram that follows, “The Reflective Method”).

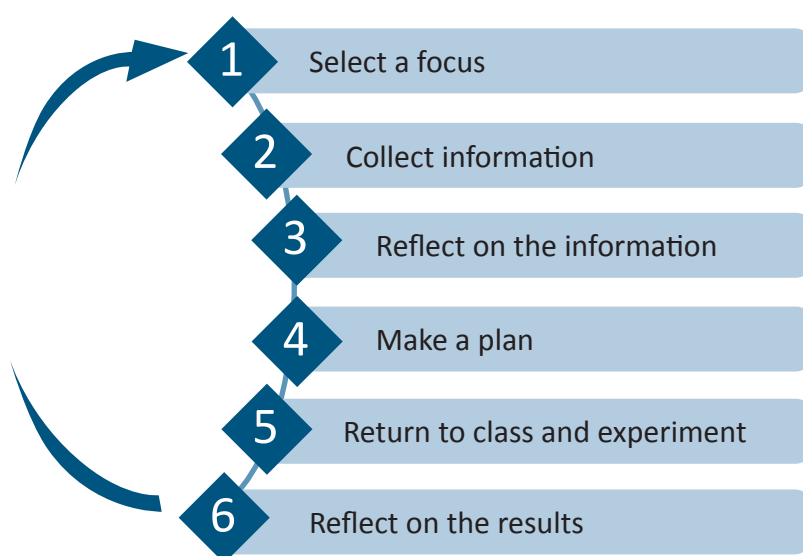
⑥ PD partnerships are confidential

The support a PD Partner offers is non-evaluative and *not* connected to supervision or performance evaluation. For this reason, PD Partners do not share the names of the instructors they work with, nor do they share details of specific classroom practices. They *do* share, in brief reports to their employer and to the PD Partner project staff, the topic of exploration, the learning that was gained, and the process followed to explore the topic (though identifying details are not included in these reports).

The Reflective Method

The Reflective Method is a practical approach to applying professional learning to classroom practice. The focus of exploration will vary from instructor to instructor. One may be interested in exploring a particular topic that is relevant to her learners, while another might pursue an approach to teaching a certain skill and another may want to apply a new teaching strategy learned from a workshop. This method requires instructors to ask themselves:

How can I reflect on my instructional decisions and the impact they have on learners in order to create an optimal environment for language learning?



1 Select a focus

Select a question, topic, area of interest or classroom issue to explore. The topic may represent an area of special interest to you, or may present itself through policy changes, classroom activities or professional development. Possible examples include:

- A funder- or employer-mandated change or initiative
- The introduction of a new resource you want to explore
- An approach/resource that piqued your interest at a conference or workshop you attended
- An incident or event in the classroom that was surprising, concerning, satisfying or interesting to you



See Chapter 2 of *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: An Instructor Handbook* for one-page resources that can help facilitate steps 1 and 2 of the Reflective Method.

2 Collect information

Collect information about learners and about the focus identified in Step 1. This may involve observing learners and describing what is happening in the classroom in an effort to consider as many factors as possible. It may also involve using data collection strategies, such as:

- Learner questionnaires, surveys or interviews
- Observing learners or classroom activities (e.g., with video or audio recording, or with a colleague observing)
- Examining lesson plans, keeping a journal, examining learner work

Collecting information about the topic may involve exploring information about related instructional approaches and strategies. It could involve:

- Observing or learning about what colleagues do
- Reading related research articles or summaries and learning about evidence-based techniques
- Examining a resource and the principles upon which it is based

3 Reflect on the information

Examine the data from Step 2 as they relate to your instructional practices. This can include examining:

- New information you have gained about your classroom practices and their effect on learners
- Feedback from learners on how they approach a skill, such as listening
- The attitudes, assumptions or underlying theories reflected in your instructional practices
- The degree to which your instructional practices relate to your stated beliefs or theories regarding language instruction and learning

4 Make a plan

Based on steps 2 and 3, identify options for how you might proceed, and select one. This may include trying a new teaching technique or strategy, changing an approach or deciding that further information is needed. You may want to discuss your options with a peer, an instructor learning group or a supervisor. Developing a clear plan of action and a starting point is important for Step 5.

5 Return to class and experiment

Carry out the plan from Step 4. This may involve trying the alternative technique, instructional strategy or approach in the classroom. This step involves adopting an attitude of open-mindedness, whole-heartedness and exploration. It may involve trying an approach or technique about which you have doubts, or which differs from your usual approach.

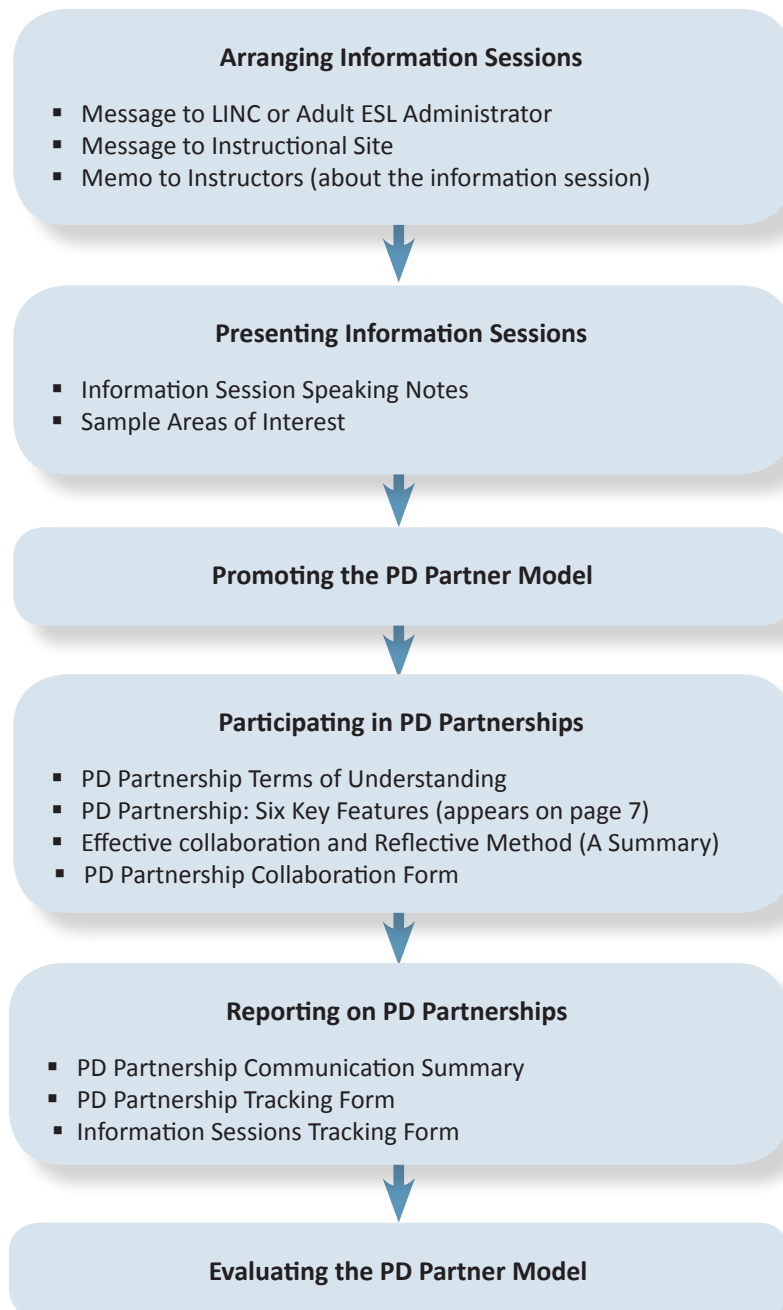
6 Reflect on the results of experimenting

Reflect on results in the classroom—observe and consider what impact the alternative instructional practice has had on learners. Based on the results, you may decide to incorporate the change into your teaching. Alternatively, you may go back to Step 4 and make a new plan to either collect more information or experiment with another approach.

Implementation Processes and Documents

The following pages describe the PD Partner implementation processes, provide step-by-step instructions and offer customizable forms and templates.

The implementation process begins with the PD Partner arranging and delivering brief, 15-minute face-to-face information sessions to instructors. The information sessions allow instructors to meet the PD Partner in person, learn about the PD partnering opportunity and ask questions. Piloting of the PD Partner model demonstrated that this in-person approach is effective. The chart below summarizes the forms and templates offered on the following pages:



Arranging Information Sessions

Implementation Documents

- Message to LINC or Adult ESL Administrator (page 12)
- Message to Instructional Site (page 13)
- Memo to Instructors (about the information session) (page 14)

Instructions

These messages can be used to introduce the PD Partner opportunity to administrators or site supervisors and to arrange information sessions at instructional sites. The first two messages are useful for arranging information sessions within larger organizations (e.g., school boards, large community agencies with multiple sites) rather than at smaller, individual sites, where arrangements may be made more informally.

Email Message to LINC Administrator: This message is used to obtain permission from the language training provider administrator to contact a particular instructional site to arrange an information session there. It introduces the PD Partner model and requests permission from the administrator. It is sent by the PD Partner, with a copy of the *Memo to instructors about the information session* as an email attachment. Should the LINC administrator want more detail about PD partnering, the PD Partner can also send:

- PD Partnerships: Six Key Features (page 7)
- Effective Collaboration and Reflective Method (A Summary) (page 24)
- Introducing...The PD Partner Model (page 19)

Email Message to Instructional Site: This message is used *after* obtaining permission from the language training provider administrator. It is emailed by the PD Partner to the site supervisor or administrative assistant of an individual instructional site to arrange an information session there.

Memo to Instructors (about the information session): When details about the information session (date, time, location) have been finalized with the administrative assistant (or site supervisor), this memo can be customized by the PD Partner to include relevant particulars (e.g., date, time and room number).

The memo is emailed by the PD Partner to the administrative assistant of the instructional site, who prints and distributes a copy to each instructor at the site. The memo introduces the PD partnering opportunity to instructors, invites them to the information session and includes details about the date and time of the session.

Adaptations

These messages can be adapted to suit local needs. In smaller organizations where everyone knows one another, a more informal tone may be used, or the messages may be conveyed orally.

Each instructor should receive a hard copy of a written memo before the information session; this will ensure that they are aware of the information session and the PD partnering opportunity.

Message to LINC Administrator

[Insert date]

Dear [insert name of administrator]:

I am writing to you in the role of a PD Partner. As a PD Partner, I am available to provide one-to-one, non-evaluative support to willing instructors in their professional learning. This involves collaborating with instructors to explore an aspect of classroom practice that is of particular interest to them, with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for learners. I am writing to request your permission to offer this opportunity to instructors at [insert site name].

I would like to provide a brief information session to the instructors at [insert site name] to inform them of this opportunity. The information session would take place during working hours and be about 15 minutes in length. I would ask that instructors provide the learners in their classes with an independent classroom activity while I deliver the information session.

If you agree, please provide me with the email address and phone number of the administrative assistant at [insert site name] so that I can arrange a day and time to deliver the session.

With your approval, here are the procedures I will follow:

- 1) I will email the administrative assistant to arrange a date, time and room number for the information session. Ideally, the session will take place 15 minutes prior to a scheduled instructional break.
- 2) After I arrange a date and time with the administrative assistant, I will email him/her a memo outlining the details of the information session, and ask that she/he distribute a copy to each instructor at the site. (For your reference, I have attached the *Memo* to this email.)
- 3) I will arrive at the instructional site at the appointed date and time and deliver the 15-minute information session to instructors.

Note: PD partnerships are voluntary, confidential and not connected to performance evaluation. For this reason, I would not expect a supervisor to be present during an information session.

- 4) After the information session, instructors who wish to take part will contact me directly by email to set up an initial meeting. The instructor will select a topic area or a classroom challenge that he/she wishes to explore and we will meet to collaborate on that exploration.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

[insert your (PD Partner) name]

[insert your email address]

Message to Instructional Site

[insert date]

Hello [insert name of administrative assistant],

I would like to deliver an information session to instructors at [insert site name]. The information session would be no longer than 15 minutes in length. The purpose of the session is to inform the instructors about a professional learning opportunity.

I have received permission to provide this information session at [insert site name] from [insert LINC or Adult ESL administrator's name]. I am writing you to arrange a suitable time, date and room for the session.

My preference is to deliver the session on [insert your preferred date/dates]. Ideally, I would like to begin 15 minutes prior to a scheduled instructional break.

Could you please email me to let me know:

- a) What time the classes begin, break, have lunch and finish
 - b) A room number that would be suitable for the information session
 - c) Whether or not the date I suggested above would be suitable
- After we agree on the date, time and room, I will email you a memo for instructors. Please print the memo and give a copy to each instructor.

Thank you,

[enter your (PD Partner) name, position and email address]

Memo to Instructors (about the information session)

To: All instructional staff at [\[insert name of instructional site\]](#)

From: [\[insert your name\]](#), PD Partner

Date: [\[insert date\]](#)

Background

[\[insert the name of the organization\]](#) is providing a model of job-embedded professional development support to instructors that allows them to receive support from a **PD Partner**—an individual trained to provide collaborative support to instructors interested in applying professional learning to classroom practice. As a PD Partner, I have completed a training course that covered foundational knowledge of the CLB, sources for up-to-date research on language learning and TESL, and a collaborative, non-evaluative approach to peer coaching.

Information session

I will provide a brief information session to the instructors at your site at [\[insert time of visit\]](#) on [\[insert date of visit\]](#) in [\[insert room number\]](#). Please provide your learners with an activity they can work on independently for about 15 minutes so that you are able to join the information session. After our brief information session, further participation is entirely up to you.

The PD opportunity

If you choose to take part, you and I will collaborate to explore a topic of your choice that is related to your classroom practice. During this collaboration, we will meet in your classroom about three to five times during work hours, and we may also have email contact.

As a PD Partner, I am knowledgeable about key concepts in CLB-based programming, sources of up-to-date research articles, and a collaborative approach to supporting instructors in professional development. The PD Partner role is based on a peer model in which one partner does not necessarily have more expertise than the other. While I do not have expertise in all aspects of instructional practice, I am available to collaborate with you in your area of interest. I will have time outside our meetings to do some research to support your topic of exploration.

There are different ways we could work together. As a PD Partner, I could be:

- Someone with whom to brainstorm possible approaches to classroom challenges
- A second pair of hands to search for information on research-based instructional strategies relevant to your class or area of interest
- A second instructor with whom to try out techniques in the classroom
- A second pair of eyes to observe your learners as you teach and be available for subsequent discussions (although it is not required that a PD Partner observe your class)
- A coach with whom to set goals

Find out more at the information session! I look forward to meeting you there.

Presenting Information Sessions

Implementation Documents

- Information Session Speaking Notes (page 16)
- Sample Areas of Interest (page 17)

Instructions

The following documents can be used by the PD Partner when preparing and delivering information sessions to instructors about the PD partnership opportunity.

Information Sessions Speaking Notes: The speaking notes outline key points to convey to instructors during an information session. The PD Partner can use the speaking notes to develop a 10-minute speech introducing the PD partnership opportunity, leaving about five minutes for questions.

PD Partners can use the Information Sessions Tracking Form (described on page 29) to keep a record of the information sessions they deliver.

Sample Areas of Interest: This form lists possible areas of interest that could be explored in a PD partnership. It can be distributed to the instructors who attend an information session. Before distributing this form, the PD Partner records his/her name and email address on it. Instructors interested in working with a PD Partner use the form to contact the PD Partner as the first step towards establishing a PD partnership.

Adaptations

The *Sample Areas of Interest* form can be adapted to include other areas of interest relevant to instructors at particular sites. An important consideration when adding additional topics to the list is that they be narrow enough to be explored within the current model of PD partnerships (i.e., in short, focused visits during work hours with minimal disruption to the class).

Information Session Speaking Notes

Introduce the PD opportunity

- a) Introduce yourself and state your position as a PD Partner and your availability (e.g., *I am available one day a week for the next three months to provide PD partnering to interested instructors*).
- b) Explain the offer:
 - An opportunity to partner with me (a PD Partner) to collaborate on a topic of your choice
 - Why choose to participate? (Possible answer: as instructors, we attend conferences and workshops, but often don't have the time or resources to apply what we learn. We may want to explore a specific instructional strategy, but don't have the time to research it.)

Explain how PD partnerships work

- c) Outline the key features of a PD partnership, saying a little bit about each (refer to p. 7):
 - *The PD Partner is a peer with no ties to supervision; your participation is confidential.*
 - *PD Partnerships are voluntary, job-embedded, non-evaluative and collaborative, based on a topic selected by the instructor, confidential, and follow a goal-directed reflective cycle.*
 - *The instructor decides how much involvement he/she would like from the PD Partner (classroom observation by the PD Partner is possible, though not required).*

Note: If you wish, copy pages 7 and 24 onto one double-sided page and distribute to instructors.

Provide examples

- d) Provide concrete examples of how you might assist the instructors with their PD (give examples of previous collaborations):
 - You may assist and collaborate by: *brainstorming together possible approaches to classroom challenges; discussing the instructor's professional needs with the PD Partner staff team to obtain different perspectives on an issue; locating research-based instructional strategies in an area of interest and summarizing the information; assisting with trying out techniques in the classroom*
 - Provide examples of previous collaborations (draw from your own experience or from the examples on pages 19–20).

Information about next steps

- e) Provide clear instructions on how interested instructors can contact you to initiate a partnership (e.g., talk to you immediately, email you using your contact information on the Sample Areas of Interest form).
- f) Provide clear timelines on when interested instructors should contact you (e.g., *contact me within one week*), the timeline in which you are available (e.g., *I am a PD Partner only for the next few weeks*) and your limitations (e.g., *I work as a PD Partner part-time, and am limited in how many partnerships I can handle; I will partner with instructors on a first-come, first-served basis*).

PD Partnership Sample Areas of Interest

PD Partner

(name)

(email)

If you decide to work with a PD Partner, you can let me know right away, or you can contact me by email. Then we will set up a first meeting and make a plan for our collaboration. In your email, please identify an area of classroom practice that you are interested in exploring. You can select one or two areas from the list below that you are particularly interested in, or identify another topic.

The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and task-based instruction

- ☐ Drawing from the revised CLB document for lesson planning and assessment
- ☐ Using the Features of Communication in the CLB document to ensure activities are level-appropriate
- ☐ Identifying classroom tasks that are relevant to learners' needs
- ☐ Doing a task analysis to determine what to teach
- ☐ Using authentic materials to enhance classroom tasks
- ☐ Trying out a model of task-based instruction

Communication in the classroom

- ☐ Asking questions to encourage communication in the classroom
- ☐ Ensuring that a task is communicative and/or task-based
- ☐ Using appropriate strategies for providing feedback to learners

Strategies

- ☐ Strategies for teaching specific Listening skills (e.g., understanding unfamiliar words from the context, listening for the gist)
- ☐ Strategies for teaching specific Reading skills (e.g., skimming, scanning)
- ☐ Strategies for teaching specific Writing skills (e.g., paragraph writing)
- ☐ Strategies for vocabulary development
- ☐ Strategies for teaching specific areas of pronunciation (e.g., voice tone, intonation, etc.)
- ☐ Strategies for incorporating technology into classroom activities (e.g. using a blog or wiki)

Assessment tools and strategies

- ☐ Strategies and tools for learner self-assessment and/or peer-assessment
- ☐ Tools or templates (checklists, rubrics, forms) for recording formative assessments

Other

Promoting the PD Partner Opportunity

(optional)

Implementation Documents

- The PD Partner Model (page 19)
- PD Partnership Examples (page 20)
- Sample PD Partner Flyer (page 21)

Instructions

In addition to the “information session” strategy, language training providers may want to promote the PD partnering opportunity through a flyer, an article in a memo, or on an employee intranet. The documents on the following pages can be used or adapted for this purpose.

In addition, providers may want to use the following documents for promotional purposes:

- PD Partnerships: Six Key Features (see page 7)
- Effective Collaboration and Reflective Method (A Summary) (see page 24)
- The Reflective Method (see pages 8–9)

Adaptations

The documents can be adapted to suit the needs of language training providers.

Introducing... The PD Partner Model

A PD Partner is a trained peer who is available to visit willing instructors in their classrooms to offer non-evaluative, collaborative support in exploring a particular aspect of classroom practice with the goal of improving outcomes for learners.

Research in adult education and professional development has emphasized that PD is successful when it is relevant to an instructor's context and incorporates opportunities to apply new learning immediately to the classroom.⁴ A PD Partner embodies this approach.

A PD Partner receives training in CLB-based instruction and assessment, non-evaluative and collaborative communication skills, and a reflective method to help facilitate an instructor's exploration of a topic of interest.

A PD Partner is not an expert in all areas that instructors wish to explore. She/he provides support under the assumption that "two heads are better than one." As a peer with specialized training, the PD Partner can offer "another pair of hands," possibly seeking out relevant research or assisting with applying an instructional technique; "another pair of eyes" to observe learners (although observation is not required in a partnership); or "another perspective" in brainstorming possible instructional options.

One instructor's experience with a PD Partner

I was interested in having a PD Partner ...

Working collaboratively with another instructor to explore an area of my choice seemed to be a focused approach that would help me address the specific needs of my learners.

My topic of exploration ...

Most of the learners in my class were speakers of the same language. They were reluctant to engage in speaking activities, and seemed to resist pair and group work. I wanted to find ways to improve their speaking competence so they could communicate better.

We explored the topic together ...

We decided to find out what the research says about teaching ESL to adult learners of this particular language group, and to explore some communicative language teaching strategies that might work in my class. The PD Partner spent some time sifting through research and was able to bring me information that helped me understand some cultural characteristics of learners and some specific learning strategies I could introduce.

I tried some of the strategies. I also used a greater variety of simulations and task-based activities, and I think the classroom atmosphere became more engaging.

Working with a PD Partner provided me with a great opportunity to discuss and share experiences as well as to brainstorm instructional methods I applied in my classroom.

⁴ Zepeda, 2008.

PD Partnership Examples

Exploring Performance Assessment Tools

I was interested in finding out about and trying tools I could use to give meaningful feedback to learners after formative assessment tasks.

I explored the topic with a PD Partner...

We talked about the assessment strategy I was using. I was concerned that the only feedback I was giving learners was a numeric grade. My PD Partner did some research, found some different tools I could use for formative assessments and presented me with a couple of options to choose from. I decided to try using a checklist for a speaking assessment but I felt that I needed to adapt it slightly so that it would be easy for my learners to understand.

The checklist worked well and learners were happy to get some feedback on specific areas of their performance.

Working with a PD Partner gave me a chance to reflect on how I was assessing learners and make changes that could help learners see their progress and identify areas they needed to work on.

Exploring Listening Comprehension

I was interested in improving learners' listening comprehension using newscasts. I also wanted to explore why learners were having challenges.

I explored the topic with a PD Partner...

We decided to observe learners closely as they completed comprehension activities after listening to a newscast. We also brainstormed a few questions we would ask them about their listening challenges. My PD Partner also sent me a couple of research articles about listening strategies and comprehension challenges related to the language background of my group of learners. I liked that the PD Partner tailored her research to my own classroom situation and topic.

Through our activities, I was able to make some important discoveries about my learners. As a result, I've started teaching specific listening strategies and providing focused practice using them. For me, this was an excellent form of professional development. It brought tangible results to my class and was based on my own real situation and needs.

Exploring An Online Needs Assessment Survey

I wanted to experiment with a more efficient way to conduct needs assessments. I wanted a survey that would be easy to administer and summarize and would yield meaningful results. I wondered about doing it electronically, but never found the time to set it up.

I explored the topic with a PD Partner...

We talked about using SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) to make a short needs assessment survey. My PD Partner figured out how to do it and created a simple survey from my previous survey questions. Then we talked about how to improve the questions to get more meaningful information from learners. We created three different surveys and my PD Partner transferred them to SurveyMonkey. I set up a free account so I could adapt them and create more on my own.

Learners loved completing the survey and found it easy to do on the computer—I received 20 results! I've recommended that our LINC administrator purchase an account so all the instructors can benefit from it. I also offered to give a presentation to other instructors on the benefits of conducting needs assessment surveys online.

A Professional Development Opportunity

Are you interested in learning more about an area of ESL instruction (of your choice) and applying what you learn to your teaching? Would you like someone to collaborate with on this learning project?

A PD Partner can help!



Q: What is a PD Partner?

A PD Partner is a peer who is available to visit willing instructors in their classrooms to offer non-evaluative, collaborative support in exploring a particular aspect of classroom practice with the common goal of improving outcomes for learners. A PD Partner is available for a limited time to offer this support to interested instructors.

A PD partnership can involve any area of ESL instruction, as long as it is relevant to your class and involves applying the learning directly to your classroom. For example:

Sarah notices that her learners are reluctant to work in groups. She wants to explore strategies for effective group work.

Yolanda wants to experiment with a class blog. She doesn't have time to figure out how to do it herself; she asks a PD Partner to help her.

Catherine heard about the Willis method for task-based teaching at the TESL conference. She wants a PD Partner to help her try it out.

Jim wants to learn about how he can use the revised CLB document to help him plan lessons.

Your area of interest?

Q: What will happen if I sign up?

In the coming weeks, you and the PD Partner will meet a few times during class time to collaborate on a plan to explore your topic together and apply your findings to your classroom.

Q: How do I find out more?

To learn more about this opportunity, e-mail [\[insert PD Partner name and email address\]](#).

Participating in PD Partnerships

Implementation Documents

- PD Partnership Terms of Understanding (page 23)
- Effective Collaboration and Reflective Method (A Summary) (page 24)
- PD Partnership Collaboration Form (page 25)

Instructions

PD Partnership Terms of Understanding: This document facilitates a shared understanding of the roles of the PD Partner and the instructor. It is used in the first meeting of a PD partnership. The PD Partner provides a copy to the instructor (e.g., by email prior to the first meeting, or in person at the first meeting) and discusses details or concerns.

In addition to the Terms of Understanding document, the PD Partner should provide the instructor (by email or in person) with the following two documents, which are referred to in the Terms of Understanding. If sending by email, these documents can also be offered as a hard copy during the first meeting. They can be photocopied as a double-sided, one-page resource.

- The PD Partnership: Six Key Features (page 7)
- Effective Collaboration and Reflective Method (A Summary) (page 24)

PD Partnership Collaboration Form: This form provides a template for use in documenting the PD partnership's goals and activities. Its purposes are to:

- Help maintain the focus of the partnership on setting goals and working towards meeting them
- Keep a record of what was discussed and accomplished at each meeting
- Plan next steps
- Maintain a shared understanding of the goals and follow-up activities

The collaboration form is completed by the PD Partner *and* the instructor during each of their meetings. Either both parties fill in their own hard copies of the form with the same notes, or one copy of the form is used and photocopied so that both parties have the same information.

Adaptations

The *PD Partnership Collaboration Form* may be adapted to best suit individual needs.

PD Partnership Terms of Understanding

PD Partner: _____

PD Partner email: _____

Instructor: _____

Instructor email: _____

Date collaboration begins: _____

This form will help to ensure a shared understanding of the roles of the PD Partner and the instructor in a PD partnership. Two documents explain the nature of the collaboration and can provide a focus for discussion when a partnership begins.

- **Document 1:** *PD Partnership: Six Key Features* explains the voluntary, job-embedded, instructor-driven, collaborative, goal-directed and confidential nature of the partnership.
- **Document 2:** *The Characteristics of Effective Collaboration* describes the ideal collaboration that the PD Partner is aiming to achieve with the instructor: goal-directed, collegial, descriptive, provisional, respectful, reflective, evidence-based and well-informed. *The Reflective Method* outlines the six-step process for exploring a topic and applying learning to classroom practice.

A PD partnership will involve exploring a topic of interest (selected by the instructor) using the six-step Reflective Method. In general, this requires between three and six brief meetings during classroom time. In order to keep the focus of the partnership on the Reflective Method, the PD Partner is not able to teach the instructor's class or only provide instructional resources. Rather, the partnership may involve:

- Brainstorming possible approaches to classroom challenges
- Exploring and experimenting with classroom techniques and evidence-based strategies
- Discussing research on different strategies that can be used the instructor or the learners

Both the PD Partner and the instructor can support the partnership by clearly communicating about their expectations, raising questions and discussing issues as they arise, and setting clear goals for the partnership.

The instructor can support the partnership by:

- Having an independent activity ready for learners to facilitate a brief meeting with the PD Partner
- Being open to exploring different approaches to classroom issues

The PD Partner can support the partnership by:

- Listening carefully and ensuring that she/he understands the instructor's topic of interest
- Providing research support, when relevant

Effective Collaboration and the Reflective Method (A Summary)

Characteristics of Effective Collaboration in a PD Partnership⁵

Goal-directed: The partnership is focused on exploring a topic that is of interest to an instructor and situated in his/her classroom practice. This exploration is directed towards applying knowledge to classroom practice and, ultimately, enhancing learner outcomes.

Collegial: Power is equal among the PD Partners. Both have areas of expertise. The scope of knowledge in the field is much broader than either; neither is the authority. Knowledge, experience and instructional alternatives are shared with the assumption that “two heads are better than one.”

Descriptive/Non-evaluative: Through their choice of words, body language and tone, partners reflect an open-minded, non-judgmental, non-evaluative stance. They strive to observe and describe without offering evaluative interpretations. They avoid judging, diagnosing, and using evaluative praise or criticism.

Provisional/Non-prescriptive: Partners propose alternative instructional techniques or teaching strategies as *possible* options. They avoid prescriptive or evaluative judgments of teaching techniques. They avoid ordering, moralizing, inappropriate questioning, prying, advising, lecturing or taking on the role of “the expert.”

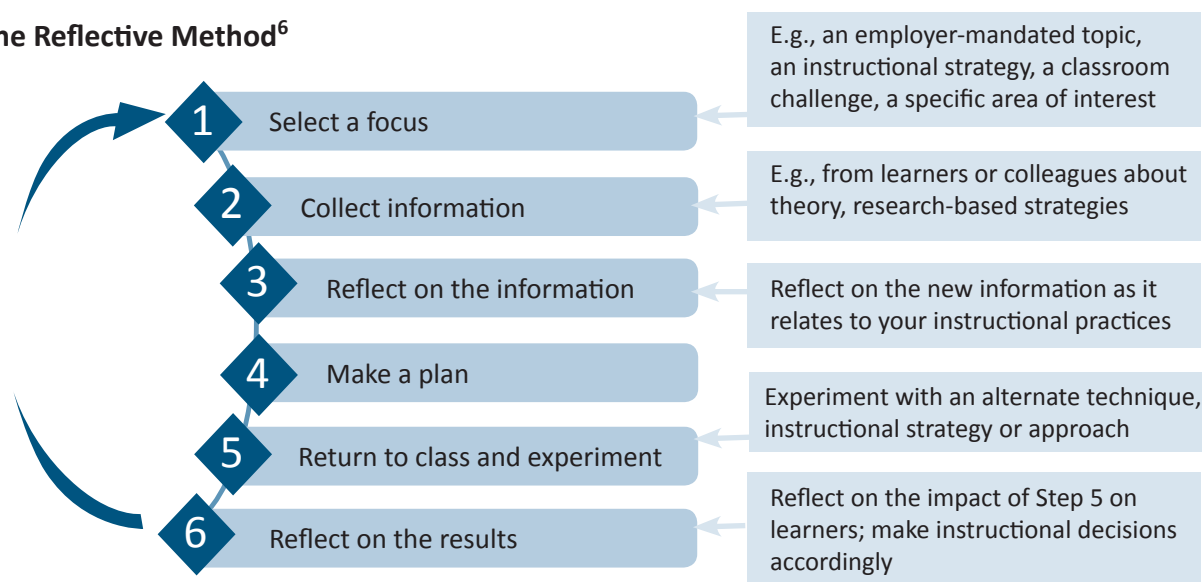
Respectful: The instructor is respected as the expert in his or her classroom. Ultimately, the choice of which instructional practices are best for his/her context lies with the instructor. However, the collaborative, reflective nature of a PD partnership can contribute to making an informed choice.

Reflective: Both parties strive to model a reflective stance during collaboration. For example, they actively subject their own ideas and interpretations to critical analysis. The approach to observation and discussion is curious and inquiring; ideas are explored as possibilities rather than as “the” solution.

Evidence-based: The collaboration process focuses on basing instructional decisions on evidence. Evidence serves as data for evaluation and may be collected from learners, or by SLA or TESL research.

Well-informed: The collaboration is informed by key concepts in CLB-based instruction (i.e., task-based, learner-centred, competency-based), best practices and research in adult ESL instruction.

The Reflective Method⁶



⁵ Informed by Supervision in Practice (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000) and Language Teaching Awareness: A guide to exploring beliefs and practices (Gebhard & Orprandy, 2000).

⁶ See Chapter 2 of *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: An Instructor Handbook* for information on the Reflective Method.

PD Partnership Collaboration Form

Instructor: _____ Date: _____

PD Partner: _____

Identifying a topic

Topic to explore:

Instructor's goal: *Through this partnership, I would like to ...*

Involving learners (if applicable):

Planning for next meeting

Next meeting or contact will be:

To prepare, the PD Partner will:

The instructor will:

Summary of this meeting

Did we meet the goal for today's meeting? ☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No

If *no* or *somewhat*, please explain below:

.

Reporting on PD Partnerships

Implementation Documents

- PD Partnerships Communication Summary (page 28)
- PD Partnerships Tracking Form (page 29)
- Information Sessions Tracking Form (page 30)

Instructions

PD Partnerships Communication Summary: This report is completed by the PD Partner. It summarizes each visit and/or communication between the PD Partner and the instructor and can be used to reflect on the partnership. Information in the form can be shared with the PD Partner's employer, who may use the data to evaluate the success of the PD Partner model or to assist the PD Partner. If information on this form is shared with anyone, instructor names should not be included.

Information Sessions Tracking Form: This form is completed by the PD Partner to document and report on information sessions that have been delivered. It should be completed each time an information session is delivered (even to one instructor). The form serves two purposes:

- It provides the PD Partner with a documentation process.
- It provides accountability to the employer of the PD Partner.

PD Partnerships Tracking Form (*not to include instructor names*): This form serves as a record of all PD partnerships, in terms of the location (centre), topic, start and end dates. It can be shared with the PD Partner's employer. To maintain the instructor's confidentiality, it should *not* include personal information such as instructor names or contact information.

Adaptations

The *PD Partnership Collaboration Form* may be adapted to best suit individual needs.

PD Partnership Communication Summary: Explanation

This page illustrates how to complete the PD partnership communication summary. To make additional entries, copy and paste a blank entry.

Include the date and check off the type of communication (phone, email or face-to-face)

Description: Include a brief factual description of the communication or visit. If it involved a series of email messages, summarize them (and include a date range in the date column).

Drawing from research or other sources: Describe the resources (e.g., the *Instructor Handbook*, research, colleagues) drawn on in the partnership. If relevant, include the URL or attach any documents used (they could be used in a later partnership).

Reflection: Briefly describe challenges, successes, lessons learned, concerns or suggestions.

Nov 23-25,
12

☐Phone
☒Email
☒visit

Description of communication: *After exchanging several brief emails to organize the first meeting (Dec 2), we met to talk briefly about the topic. Instructor #1 is interested in using the newspaper with her CLB 3 learners. Her centre receives several copies every Wednesday, but she's never used them with her class. I emailed her the Terms of Understanding, as well as the Six Key Features and The Collaboration and the Method (A Summary).*

Drawing from research/resources: *To start with, I compiled a short list of strategies for using the newspaper (from colleagues and from research), and plan on seeing what instructor #1 wants to try.*

I consulted a short article on using newspapers in an ESL class: <http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Daly-Newspaper.html>.

Reflection on challenges/successes: *I had to clarify with the instructor that she needed to have an independent activity ready for her learners so that we could talk. I need to make sure this is emphasized more in the info sessions!*

PD Partnerships Communication Summary

PD Partner name & email: _____

PD Partner organization & city: _____

Instructor # *(do not include name)*: _____ Class level: _____

Topic: _____

Date: _____ Description: _____

- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Email
- ☐ visit

Drawing from research/resources:

Reflection:

Date: _____ Description: _____

- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Email
- ☐ visit

Drawing from research/resources:

Reflection:

PD Partnerships Tracking Form

(for reporting purposes; do not use instructor names)

PD Partner name & email: _____

PD Partner organization, city: _____

Instructor number	Centre	Topic	Start Date	End Date	Emailed survey? (Yes/No)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Information Sessions Tracking Form

PD Partner:

Organization:

PD Partner email:

Date & time of session	Centre name & address	Number of instructors attending	Information session notes (e.g., possible next steps if uptake is minimal)	Uptake
Feb. 7, 2012 10:00-10:15	Eglinton LINC 7564 Eglinton Ave Toronto	7	1 instructor spoke to me after the session and we arranged a first meeting. 1 instructor was absent; I left her a note with my email address and a handout.	1

Evaluating the PD Partner Model

Evaluating the PD Partner model can inform decisions about enhancing or adapting the model to increase its effectiveness. Evaluation surveys are an effective way to gather suggestions for improvement, and can provide data that can be used to assess the effectiveness of the PD Partner model. There are various ways in which an evaluation can be conducted, from informal discussions with participants to more formal and anonymous surveys of participants.

Language training programs can draw on the methods used during the 2013 PD Partner implementation, which included three separate anonymous online surveys that targeted three participant groups:

- **Instructors who participate in PD partnerships**

A short e-survey was developed using SurveyMonkey. A URL link to the survey was provided to PD Partners, who in turn emailed the link to participating instructors at the completion of each PD partnership. The survey was designed to be anonymous and take about five minutes to complete. The questions collected information relevant to assessing the impact of the PD Partner experience and identifying possible enhancements, including the following information:

- name of PD Partner and topic explored
- a rating regarding the helpfulness of the experience
- changes to teaching as a result of the PD partnership
- suggestions for improvement

- **PD Partners**

A URL link to an e-survey was emailed to PD Partners toward the end of their participation as a PD Partner. The survey was designed to take about 15 minutes to complete, and to collect information that would be useful in assessing the success of the PD Partner model from the perspective of the PD Partners. For example:

- rating the degree of satisfaction felt with PD Partner training (and reasons)
- rating the usability of the implementation documents and processes
- suggestions for improving the implementation documents and processes
- suggestions for improving the model/PD Partnering

- **Administrators**

Administrators of organizations with PD Partners were asked to complete a short e-survey to collect information that would be useful in assessing the success of the PD Partner model from the administrator's perspective. For example:

- rating the ease of administering the PD Partner model
- rating the usefulness and clarity of the reports submitted by PD Partners
- suggestions of ways to improve the model
- suggestions of ways to implement the model sustainably

Chapter 2

Becoming a PD Partner



Introduction

Language training providers interested in implementing the PD Partner model in some form should consider developing training to prepare an instructor (or other staff person) to take on the role of a PD Partner. This chapter summarizes the PD Partner training course developed and delivered during the 2012–2013 PD Partner implementation period funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

Identifying the PD Partner

Selecting who should take on the role of a PD Partner is an important initial consideration. In the 2012–2013 PD Partner model implementation (which involved 24 LINC language training providers in Ontario), LINC instructors nominated by administrators for PD Partner training shared the following characteristics:

- At least five years' experience teaching adult ESL at a variety of proficiency levels
- A solid grounding in CLB-based instruction
- Recognized for leadership qualities
- Able to work well without supervision
- Strong communication and collaboration skills
- Demonstrated confidence with technology (especially Internet-based research)

Training the PD Partner

The CIC-funded PD Partner training course summarized in this chapter is an example of the kind of training that can prepare instructors to take on the role of PD Partners. It is based on the 2012–2013 PD Partner model implementation, which was a blended model of instruction that combined online learning activities and forum discussions with a three-day face-to-face training period. The online instruction reinforced fundamentals of the Canadian Language Benchmarks and task-based instruction, and introduced a repertoire of communication skills relevant to peer collaboration. The face-to-face instruction reinforced these concepts and their application to the PD Partner model, and introduced the procedures and supporting documentation for implementing the partnerships. Course assignments asked participants to consider case study examples of instructor-chosen PD topics or classroom challenges and develop possible plans of action.

The materials in this chapter can be a useful starting point for language training providers interested in developing their own form of training.

Included in this chapter are:

- A general description of the training course
- A list of course materials
- A 15-page mini-guide about communication strategies, titled PD Partner Communication Strategies

The PD Partner Training Course

The PD Partner training course was designed to enhance the capacity of Ontario language training instructors to deliver job-embedded, non-evaluative professional development support to other instructors.

The PD Partner course prepared experienced instructors to become PD Partners. It involved a blended delivery format, with nine weeks of Moodle-based online activities followed by three days of face-to-face training. The course aimed to ensure that PD Partners have foundational knowledge of:

- The Canadian Language Benchmarks and their relation to instructional planning
- Sources of research articles in second-language acquisition and instruction
- A reflective approach to professional learning
- Communication strategies for a collaborative, non-evaluative approach to peer coaching

TESL Ontario accredited

The PD Partner training course was accredited by TESL Ontario as a Post TESL Certificate Training (PTCT) course. For trainees with TESL Ontario Language Instructor Accreditation, successful completion of the training is recognized on their TESL Ontario accreditation section on the TESL Ontario website at www.teslontario.net/accreditation.



Course outcomes

The PD Partner Training Course had two general outcomes, assessed by two course assignments:

- Participants will be able to apply their enhanced knowledge of CLB-based instruction and assessment, reflective practice and action research approaches to solving practical, classroom-based problems. (Assessed by Assignment #1)
- Participants will be able to apply their knowledge of the communication strategies characteristic of a collaborative and reflective approach to supporting instructors in a PD partnership. (Assessed by Assignment #2)

Blended delivery

The course was delivered through two phases: a nine-week online phase and a three-day face-to-face phase.

The online component was designed to take approximately two hours per week to complete, in addition to the time needed to complete the course assignments. The three-day face-to-face component consisted of training activities designed to consolidate and apply the knowledge gained during the online phase.

PD Partner Course Outline

During the course, participants focus on four modules of content (see below). During the online phase, they read articles, experimented with reflective tools and strategies, and participated in online forums. During the face-to-face phase, they focused on the practical aspects of being a PD partner. They discussed case studies of instructor challenges, brainstormed options for goal-directed explorations, and role-played PD Partner scenarios. More detailed outcomes are listed in the chart below.

Online Course Phase

A: Orientation (*week 1*)

- Begin to build an online community with course co-participants
- Become familiar with the course objectives and expectations and the Moodle environment
- Become familiar with the PD Partner concept and reflective practice approach

B: CLB-based instruction and assessment

Week 2: Guiding Principles of the CLB

- Define the guiding principles of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)
- Identify components of the CLB-adopted model of communicative language ability

Week 3, 4: Task-based Teaching

- Describe the difference between real world language learning tasks and enabling tasks
- Integrate a task-based approach to planning for instruction
- Identify the role of a task-based approach in classroom-based assessment

C: The Reflective Method (*weeks 5, 6*)

- Describe the role of reflection in professional development
- Identify the steps in the Reflective Method, and apply them to a classroom context
- Report on the impact of the use of a reflective tool (from Chapter 2 of the course text)

D: Communication strategies for collaboration (*weeks 7, 8, 9*)

- Identify the characteristics of effective collaboration
- Describe communication strategies that support effective collaboration in a PD partnership
- Evaluate your experience experimenting with one or more communication strategies
- Assignment 1: Post an action plan for two case studies; respond with suggestions to the action plan of at least one co-participant; submit a reflection on the suggestions on your action plans

Face-to-face Course Phase

During a three-day face-to-face component, participants:

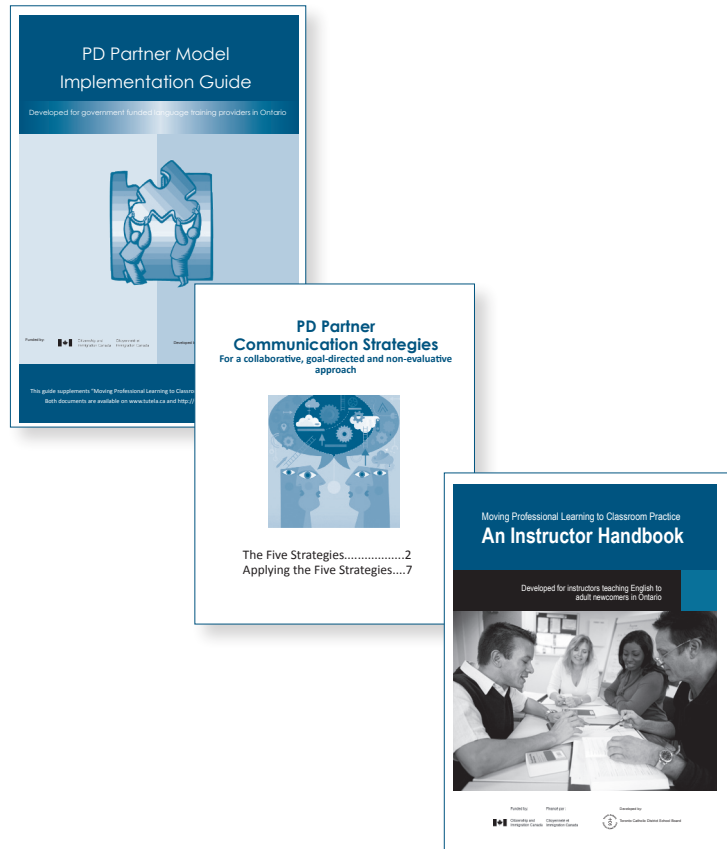
- Consolidate and deepen the knowledge and strategies learned during the online phase
- Practise PD Partner communication strategies and implementation procedures
- Further the community of practice initiated during the online portion of the PD Partner course in order to collaborate and problem-solve on job-embedded, classroom-based issues

After completing the course, participants engaged in PD partnerships with their colleagues. A final assignment (Assignment 2) was a reflective report on a PD partnership with an instructor.

Course materials

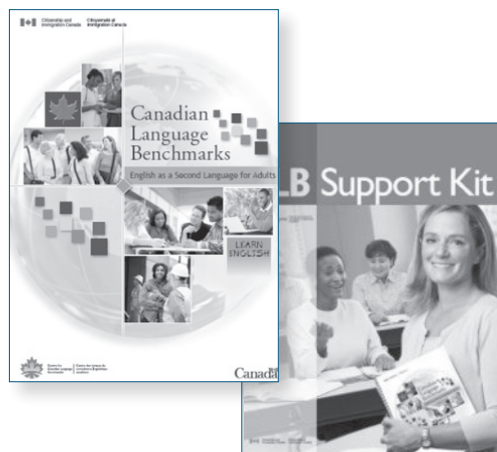
During the PD Partner course, participants drew on several sources of information.

The two main course texts were developed specifically to support the PD Partner model: *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: An Instructor Handbook* and *The PD Partner Model Implementation Guide* (which includes the mini-guide titled *PD Partner Communication Strategies*).



The *Canadian Language Benchmarks* and the *CLB Support Kit* (pictured to the right) inform CLB-based instructional planning, and are also drawn on during the training.

Finally, several case studies of past PD partnerships, as well as the experiences of the course participants were drawn on during course activities.



PD Partner Communication Strategies

For a collaborative, goal-directed and non-evaluative approach



Characteristics of effective collaboration	40
Communication strategies and characteristics of collaboration	41

The Five Strategies

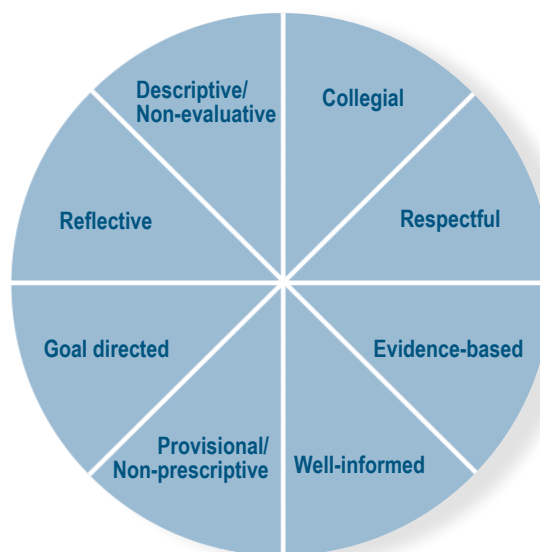
Strategy 1: Describing rather than evaluating	42
Strategy 2: Being provisional rather than certain.....	43
Strategy 3: Using probing questions.....	44
Strategy 4: Focusing on evidence-informed decision-making	45
Strategy 5: Linking classroom practices with CLB-based instruction.....	46

Applying the Strategies: Some Examples

Applying Strategy 1: Describing rather than evaluating	47
Applying Strategies 2 and 3: Using provisional language and probing questions	48
Applying Strategy 3: Using probing questions.....	49
Applying Strategies 2, 4 and 5: Using provisional language	51
Useful language for the first meeting.....	52
References.....	53

Characteristics of effective collaboration⁷ (in a PD partnership)

In a collaborative professional development partnership, two individuals work together towards a common goal by sharing knowledge, experience and instructional alternatives under the assumption that “two heads are better than one.”



Goal-directed: The partnership is focused on exploring a topic that is of interest to an instructor and situated in his/her classroom practice. This exploration is directed towards applying knowledge to classroom practice and, ultimately, enhancing learner outcomes.

Collegial: Power is equal among the PD Partners. Both have areas of expertise. The scope of knowledge in the field is much broader than either; neither one is the authority. Knowledge, experience and instructional alternatives are shared with the assumption that “two heads are better than one.”

Descriptive/Non-evaluative: Through their choice of words, body language and tone, PD Partners take an open-minded, non-judgmental, non-evaluative stance. They strive to observe and describe without offering evaluative interpretations. They avoid judging, diagnosing, and evaluative praise or criticism.

Provisional/Non-prescriptive: Partners propose alternative instructional techniques or teaching strategies as *possible* options. They avoid prescriptive or evaluative judgments of teaching techniques. They avoid ordering, moralizing, questioning inappropriately, prying, advising, lecturing or taking on the role of “the expert.”

Respectful: The instructor is respected as the expert in his/her classroom. Ultimately, the choice of which instructional practices are best for his/her context lies with the instructor. However, the collaborative, reflective nature of a PD partnership can contribute to making an informed choice.

Reflective: Both parties strive to model a reflective stance during collaboration. For example, they actively subject their own ideas and interpretations to critical analysis. The approach to observation and discussion is curious and inquiring; ideas are explored as possibilities rather than as “the” solution.

Evidence-based: The collaborative process focuses on basing instructional decisions on evidence. Evidence serves as data for evaluation and may be collected from learners, or by SLA or TESL research.

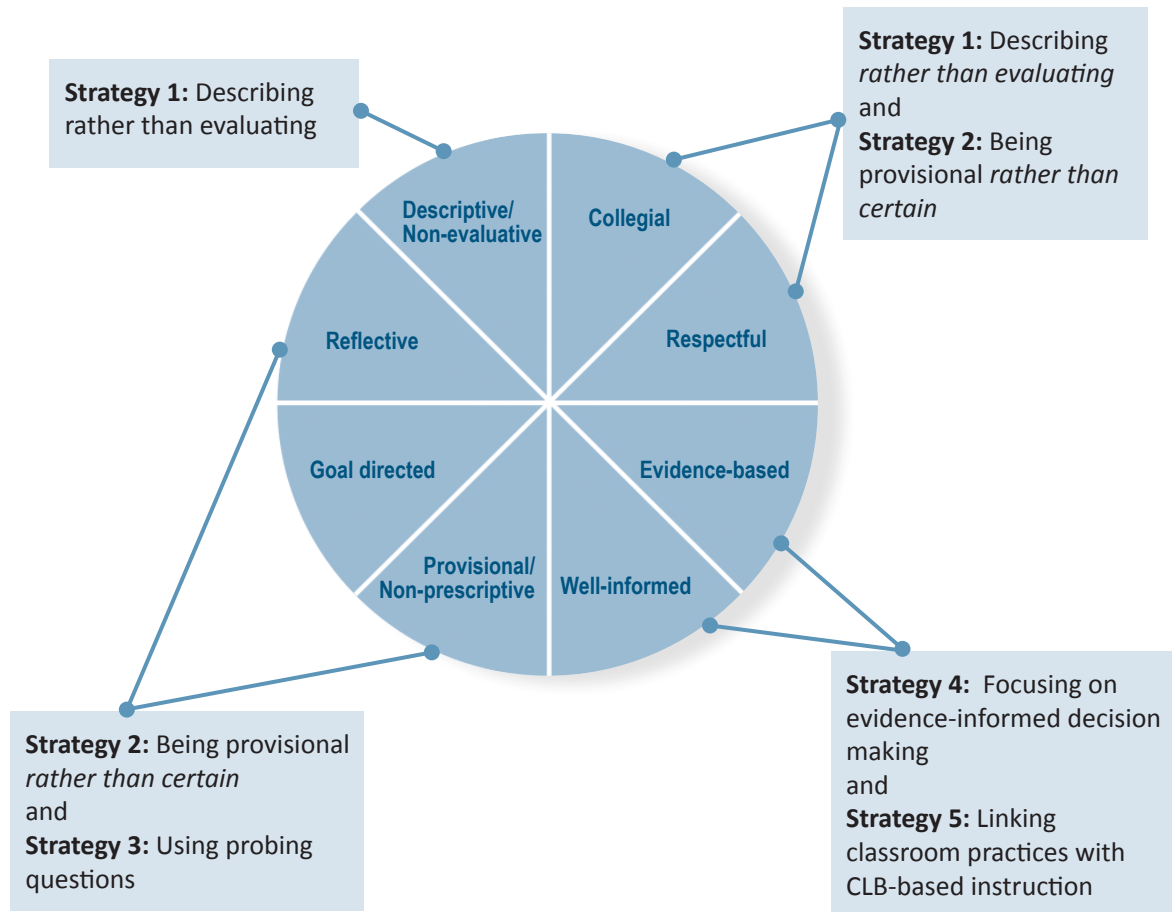
Well-informed: The collaboration is informed by key concepts in CLB-based instruction (i.e., task-based, learner-centred, competency-based), and by best practices and research in adult ESL instruction.

⁷ Informed by *Supervision in Practice* (Jeffrey Glanz & Susan Sullivan, 2000); *Language Teaching Awareness: A Guide to Exploring Beliefs and Practices* (Jerry Greer Gebhard & Robert Orprandy, 2000).

Communication strategies and characteristics of collaboration

The following pages present five communication strategies that can help to facilitate a collaborative, peer-based partnership. Pages 47–52 provide practical examples of how the communication strategies are applied in communications between a PD Partner and an instructor.

The diagram below connects the five communication strategies to the characteristics of effective collaboration. The communication strategies represent concrete ways in which PD Partners can support effective collaboration in their interactions with instructors.



Strategy 1: Describing *rather than evaluating*⁸

Descriptive language is non-judgmental rather than evaluative. It involves noticing and describing (rather than interpreting) classroom processes, behaviours and sometimes perceptions. When perceptions are described, descriptive language focuses on what is observed, and uses “I” statements to recognize that they are subjective, rather than objective, truths.

When a PD Partner uses descriptive and non-judgmental language, she/he can foster trust and empower the instructor to self-assess, make autonomous decisions and take risks. Descriptive language indicates that the PD Partner values the instructor as an expert in his/her particular context and trusts the instructor’s ability to analyze the situation and make valid instructional choices. Evaluative language, on the other hand, suggests that the person using the language is an expert, capable of passing judgment. This can create defensiveness and will reduce the possibility of the instructor benefiting from the partnership.

Even positive evaluation, such as praise, can create defensiveness. Evaluative praise sets up the person who is praising as superior and as a judge of good teaching. In contrast, descriptive praise focuses on noticing and describing observed evidence. Notice the differences between the following examples of what a PD Partner might say after a particularly effective lesson: “Learners were laughing, and almost all of them participated in the discussion. Seven learners didn’t even leave after the lesson ended!” versus “You are a good instructor” or “That lesson was very good.” By focusing on the evidence, a PD Partner can affirm an instructor’s strengths without taking on the role of an expert.

Describing	Evaluating or judging
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Describes without interpreting▪ Notices and describes observations, perceptions and events in a non-judgmental way▪ Avoids value-laden terms, such as “good” or “bad”▪ Avoids “you” statements (i.e., “You’re a good teacher”, “You need to ...”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Passes judgment▪ Questions motives or standards▪ Blames, criticizes, or praises evaluatively▪ Uses “you” statements

As a PD Partner

You may find yourself forming opinions during the collaboration about what an instructor “should be doing” (i.e., what you would do); however, your role is to support her exploration with options, rather than “shoulds.” You may wrestle with the impulse to “be useful” and appear “knowledgeable.” Some instructors may even encourage your evaluation (e.g., “How was the lesson? Was it good?”) or expect you to take on an “expert” role. Keep in mind that if you don’t resist this impulse to appear knowledgeable or expert, you may slide into adopting an evaluative role. It is helpful to have a clear understanding of the differences between description and evaluation, to be aware of where your personal tendencies lie, and to develop strategies that will help you to maintain a non-evaluative and collaborative role.

⁸ “Description” versus “Evaluation” is the first of six opposing pairs of characteristics of communication described by J.R. Gibb (1961). The first of each pair is seen to facilitate supportive communication climates, while its opposite fosters defensive climates.

Strategy 2: Being provisional *rather than certain*⁹

A “provisional” mindset can be defined as a tentative or conditional approach. In the PD Partner context, being provisional reflects an attitude of open-mindedness, a willingness to listen to other points of view and the recognition that your suggestions reflect only one perspective among many. Being provisional reflects a recognition that what you offer (e.g., instructional options or other suggestions) should be offered tentatively and is subject to the instructor’s evaluation.

PD Partners work with instructors to reflect on practice, problem-solve, and explore instructional issues related to a particular setting; they may make suggestions and offer resources. They do so in the role of collaborator, rather than “expert” or “problem solver.” As collaborators, PD Partners probe and question in order to gain understanding of the instructor’s context. They use provisional and tentative language to present possibilities and options that *could* be pursued. They leave the decision-making to the instructor, whom they recognize as the expert in his or her particular class and setting.

Being provisional	Being certain
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Open-minded; willing to explore alternative points of view or plans of action▪ Values instructor as “expert” and decision-maker in his/her setting▪ Probes and questions to encourage reflection and self-directed problem solving▪ Offers options as tentative solutions▪ Uses language that reflects an understanding that one’s suggestions are only some of many possible perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Knows what is “best”▪ Resists considering alternatives▪ Identifies problems; proves a point▪ Assumes the role of “expert” who provides the answers and solutions▪ Offers suggestions as “truths” or “shoulds”

As a PD Partner

You may feel certain about how *you* would proceed in an instructional situation. However, your role is to support the instructor’s learning and exploration, not to share your own learning in a way that narrows her choices or dictates what direction to take. PD Partners are not traditional mentors who share their expertise with a less knowledgeable peer. Rather, they are *collaborators*, there to offer an additional perspective or set of hands to support an instructor in exploring and applying learning to the classroom.

⁹ “Provisionalism” versus “Certainty” is another of the six opposing pairs of communication characteristics described by J.R. Gibb (1961).

Strategy 3: Using probing questions

Asking probing questions can foster a shared understanding of a classroom issue, spur reflection on practice, and encourage another instructor to use his or her own resources to find solutions to classroom issues.

However, probing questions can also be perceived as threatening, demanding, manipulative or intrusive. If an instructor perceives that a question is being asked to “trap” her into giving a wrong answer or to “manipulate” her into coming to a particular conclusion, she may feel resentful and disempowered. Similarly, if she perceives that the PD Partner already knows the answer and is testing to see how knowledgeable she is, or trying to lead her to a particular conclusion, she may withdraw from true collaboration.

Certainly, there is an art to the use of probing questions. When probing questions are genuine—that is, when the PD Partner is asking in a non-judgmental way and is truly curious about the instructor’s answers—they tend to generate a positive response.

The effectiveness of probing questions depends largely on context. In general, if you find yourself asking a long stream of questions and doing more talking than listening, you may want to adjust your approach, as this may feel overwhelming to an instructor. As well, asking “why” an instructor is doing something may feel threatening, as “why” often has a judgment built into it. Similarly, tag questions (e.g., “... isn’t it?”) may lead an instructor to feel coerced into agreeing with you. A good probing question is usually *not* a yes/no question, and causes an instructor to reflect and add more detail or perspective to the conversation.

More effective probing questions	Less effective probing questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ I understand that teaching pronunciation is one of your concerns. Can you tell me more, specifically, about what is concerning you?▪ What is it about role-playing that interests you?▪ Can you tell me more about why that wouldn’t work in your context? I’d like to learn more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Why are you so concerned about teaching pronunciation?▪ So, you’re interested in role-playing?▪ I see that you’re not convinced, but I still think this could work in your context, couldn’t it?

As a PD Partner

You may discover that you have an agenda when asking probing questions. That is, you might realize you are trying to elicit a particular “right” answer, or preparing to respond to an expected “wrong” answer. If you notice that you have planned your response even before the instructor has had a chance to answer your question, take a moment to reflect. Are you genuinely curious about the answers to your questions? Your questions should allow both of you to explore the issue, not put the instructor on the spot. Modals and softeners can make questions much less threatening: *How might you...? How difficult would it be to...? What could you do to...? I wonder what would happen if...? What factors seem to have...? Do you think it might help for us to...? How about...? What do you think about...?*

Strategy 4: Focusing on evidence-informed decision-making

A PD Partner can foster evidence-informed decision-making by pointing an instructor to evidence from learners or research findings to inform instructional decisions. Rather than taking on the role of “the expert” who diagnoses problems and provides solutions or answers, PD Partners listen carefully to instructors. They offer strategies for gathering information from learners, such as through observation checklists, surveys and discussion groups. They take the focus off of themselves as an expert, and offer instead to look to research findings for answers or point the instructor to resources that might be useful.

There is a caveat, however, about Strategy 4 and the role of the PD Partner. Most instructors have limited time and could use support identifying and locating relevant resources. A challenge for the PD Partner is not to fall into the role of “resource-getter” rather than PD collaborator. One way to prevent this proactively is to focus on the Reflective Method as introduced in Chapter 2 of *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: an Instructor Handbook*. In this method, conducting research or exploring resources is only one step in the process. The broader focus is on identifying an area of interest for exploration and focusing on evidence-based instructional strategies (rather than instructional texts offering classroom activities) to improve outcomes for learners.

As a PD Partner

You may feel you don’t have a wide enough range of expertise for the position. Don’t worry: Whatever expertise you do have is valuable, but your ability “find out” is more important. That is, you don’t need to have expertise in every area related to TESL, but you do need to know where to go to find answers and ideas. The following chapters in the *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: An Instructor Handbook* can help you in this role:

- Chapter 3 contains research summaries that may be relevant to many of the questions an instructor is exploring. Each research summary is followed by reflective activities and a reference list with additional resources.
- Chapter 2 provides a selection of tools designed to help instructors gather and reflect on evidence from their classrooms and use that evidence to make informed decisions. Some of the tools encourage instructors to reflect on their instruction and may be helpful during the initial stages of a partnership when the instructor is deciding what to focus on. The tool titled *TESL-related journal and article sources* in Chapter 2 provides a list of TESL-related sources, most of which are freely accessible and easy to search.

Strategy 5: Linking classroom practices with CLB-based instruction

PD Partners can articulate links between instructional practices and the concepts that underpin the Canadian Language Benchmarks. Doing so requires a solid understanding of the CLB and its guiding principles (task-based, learner-centred, competency-based).

It is important that the PD Partner is able to convey an understanding of the CLB and its connection to instructional planning and assessment, and is familiar with a range of CLB-based resources and how to locate them. A number of the research summaries in Chapter 3 of *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: An Instructor Handbook* explore concepts that underpin the CLB (e.g., *Task-based Language Teaching*, *Communicative Language Teaching*, *Assessment*, *Pragmatics*). Other places to look for resources include:

- The *Publications* page of the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks website¹⁰
- Chapter 4 of *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: An Instructor Handbook*, which contains a brief listing of documents that promote understanding of the CLB and CLB-referenced planning documents

PD Partners may also be aware of other useful CLB-referenced resources.

As a PD Partner

You may find yourself working with an instructor who is struggling with task-based assessment. If the instructor wants to focus on what task-based language teaching is, you might point the instructor to various sections of the *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: An Instructor Handbook*; for example the *Task-based Language Teaching* research summary (Chapter 4) and the related *Task-based Language Teaching Tool* (Chapter 2). If the instructor wants to focus on assessment, you may point the instructor to the *Assessment* research summary (Chapter 4). You could also direct the instructor to relevant sections of *Integrating CLB Assessment into your ESL Classroom* (Holmes, 2005), or *Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment Manitoba Best Practices Guide* (2009).¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.language.ca/>.

¹¹ <http://www.ealmb.ca/pluginfile.php/31/course/section/4/clpa-best-practices-2009.pdf>.

Applying Strategy 1: Describing rather than evaluating

During discussions about classroom issues

Empathize and summarize.
Direct the conversation towards a goal-directed exploration.

Summarize what you hear without assuming an expert role.

Check to make sure your observations are accurate.

Instructor: *"Learners never volunteer answers or ask questions. They just sit there silently."*

PD Partner: "That must be disconcerting when no one responds to your questions. I wonder why they don't answer? I guess there could be a number of reasons. There may be cultural issues at play, like how different people interpret silence and student/teacher role expectations. Another issue could be the types of questions you are asking, or the length of time you are waiting. Would you like us to explore any of these in more detail?"

"So...an assumption here is, if learners are interested, they will be answering questions and interacting. Is that right?"

"So, you're concerned about a couple of issues. You're wondering why the learners aren't answering your questions. And you want strategies for managing time in your class. Did I get that right?"

"So we've come up with four potential strategies. They are... and you are planning to choose one to try this week. I look forward to hearing about how it goes!"

"As we talked, I noticed that issues related to how your learners work together in groups kept popping up. You were wondering about whether it was best to have mixed ability groups, but worried that lower level students didn't participate. And you mentioned being unsure about how to organize groups and activities so that students would use English to communicate with each other."

After classroom observation

Describing classroom observations	Rather than	Evaluating, judging & interpreting
"While I was observing, learners were engaged in the business letter writing group task. They talked and made plans in their groups. Some groups wrote out a rough draft on scrap paper. There was lots of debating about wording of sentences. But only one group ended up writing anything on the chart paper. As I walked by, I heard learners in group 3 express frustration that they didn't have time to finish. How do you feel the lesson went today?"		"Why did you spend so much time talking about business letters? Learners seemed to be familiar with them already. You should have given them more time to complete the group task, instead."
"When you finished giving learners instructions for the task, learners started talking to each other. The learners towards the left were speaking in Chinese; another group was speaking Spanish."		"Your instructions were confusing; the learners were trying to figure out what was going on."
"I noticed that the learners were silent when you asked reading comprehension questions. I recorded that you waited an average of five seconds before moving on after each question."		"Learners were bored. They just stared blankly when you asked questions."
"Learners were laughing and involved. I could see they were quite engaged during the group activity."		"You are a very good teacher!"

Applying Strategies 2 and 3: Using provisional language and probing questions to offer or to brainstorm instructional options

	Presenting suggestions as tentative and provisional	Rather than	As an expert or diagnostician
Think out loud; use “I” statements.	“I wonder what would happen if you allowed learners to speak to each other in their own languages when working in pairs on worksheets—maybe as a trade-off, in exchange for speaking only English on communicative activities. Could that work?”		“Let learners speak to each other in their own languages when working in pairs, in exchange for speaking only English when working on communicative activities. That way they would at least be using some English in class.”
Use provisional language to offer options.	“Would it help if I search for some articles on this?”		“Here. This article by Nunan will help you.”
Use modals (e.g., could, might) and softeners (e.g., try, maybe, just, seems, a bit, possible) to express tentativeness and respect for the instructor as the decision-maker, and to convey that your suggestion is just one among many.	“Do you think it might help to talk through the timing decisions you made at each stage of your lesson?”		“Let’s talk through the timing decisions you made at each stage of your lesson.”
	“What about getting together with the other instructors at your level?”		“You need to discuss this issue with the other instructors who teach at this level.”
	“What do you think about letting learners use bilingual dictionaries when they prepare for speaking tasks, but encouraging them to put them away when they actually do the task?”		“Let learners use their dictionaries when they prepare for a speaking task, but then have them put them away when they actually do the task.”
	“There are many approaches to gathering input on learner needs. One thing I’ve done before is an e-survey, asking learners which class activities are most useful. SurveyMonkey worked well for me.”		“Why are you using a paper survey? You should use SurveyMonkey to create an e-survey to find out which class activities learners find most useful.”
	“Here is an article about ways to give learners feedback. It might be interesting to try some of these ideas out. What do you think?”		“You should try out the suggestions in this article.”
	“We could brainstorm a list of strategies for keeping the lesson moving. Then you can decide which strategies might work best.”		“I think we should brainstorm a list of strategies for keeping the lesson moving. Then we’ll decide on the best strategy.”
	“What could you do to provide scaffolding for this activity?”		“You need to introduce the vocabulary and some of the functional language they’ll need and go through the task as a class before they do it in pairs.”
	“I could try to find some sample rubrics if you think that would help.”		“I’ll bring some sample rubrics to our next meeting.”
	“You could try giving learners a little bit more time after you ask a question. Maybe tap your finger 15 times before you reword a question or give an answer—to give learners a bit of time to think.”		“Give learners more time to come up with an answer. Slow yourself down by tapping your finger 15 times before you reword a question or provide an answer.”

Applying Strategy 3: Using probing questions to learn about the instructional context and focus the discussion

The examples below demonstrate the use of probing questions in a PD Partner context. Used appropriately, probing questions can foster efficacy, facilitate flexibility and a focus on craftsmanship, enhance awareness and encourage interdependence.¹²

Valuing the instructor as the expert, encouraging reflection & problem-solving		Rather than	Diagnosing or imposing solutions
Instructor: "Learners never volunteer answers or ask questions. They just sit there silently."			
Gain information and insight: Use probing questions to focus on classroom evidence, learn about the instructional context and encourage deeper reflection.	PD Partner: "Are some learners less/more likely to answer than others? Are you thinking of a particular situation today, or a particular question that students didn't answer? Are there specific times, topics or activities when you've noticed that learners do answer questions?"	PD Partner: "Hmmmmm. They may not be as interested in this topic. It's not one of the most popular. My learners often don't select this one on my needs assessments. How about doing a new needs assessment this week to see?"	
	"What might happen if you waited a little longer than feels comfortable to you, before rephrasing the question?"	"You're not waiting long enough after you ask a question. You're giving the answer too quickly. It takes time for learners to process a question, figure out the answer, then produce it in English."	
	"How do you think they'd respond if you asked the question and had them tell their partners the answer, before getting them to speak to the class?"	"They're afraid of making a mistake in front of the class. It can take courage to speak in a group. You should ask the question, then have them tell their partner the answer, then share in front of the class."	
	"Do you think it might help to have me keep track of the questions you ask in class, and how students respond? Sometimes a pattern can be identified...."	"You're asking too many 'display' questions. You need to ask 'referential' questions. <i>Display</i> questions are ...; <i>referential</i> questions are"	
Foster efficacy: Use probing questions to foster a sense of ownership and empowerment. (Abrams, 2001, p. 1)	"What might happen if you asked them what they wanted to learn <i>to do in English</i> ?"	"You should design a student-interest survey to find out what they're interested in. It's easy. You can use Survey Monkey. Here. I'll show you."	
	"What explanations did you consider when the students indicated they had not done their homework?"	"They didn't do the homework because it was too hard. You have to provide more scaffolding activities before you assign that type of work."	
	"The next time learners do a group writing activity, what could you do to encourage them to produce a group-generated piece of writing rather than work individually on the task?"	"Next time, I suggest you give clear time frames, and explain what you expect learners to have done by a particular time. Also, explain exactly why you want them to work in groups rather than individually."	

¹² These are Garmston and Costa's five "states of mind," as presented in Abrams, 2001.

Valuing the instructor as the expert, encouraging reflection & problem-solving

Rather than

Diagnosing or imposing solutions

Facilitate flexibility:

Use probing questions to help consider a situation from another perspective (Abrams, 2001).

"I wonder why the learners ignored your instructions to write directly on the flip-chart paper. What might they have been thinking as they did their first draft on scrap paper?"

"Learners didn't want to write directly on the flipchart paper because they wanted to have a perfect piece of writing for the class to edit. They wanted to save face. So next time you should..."

"What challenges might learners face when they sit down to complete the homework assignment?"

"You need to reconsider the homework activity. It's way too difficult for CLB 2 learners!"

"I wonder... what could learners be thinking when they are sitting silently after you ask a question?"

"It takes a longer time than you realize for students to form an answer to a comprehension question. They have to decode the question, figure out the answer, and figure out how to communicate it in English. Give them more time!"

Craftsmanship:

Use probing questions to focus instructors on their craft; to put responsibility for instructional choices in their hands (Abrams, 2001).

"How else could you encourage learners to speak in English?"

"I thought the reading on Canadian culture was a bit stereotypical. You can't say all Canadians are polite!"

"What do you hope learners will take away from the reading on Canadian culture?"

"What are you hoping learners will do with what they learned in the grammar lesson on modals?"

"You need to make sure that you have a practical application for your grammar lessons."

"So you're planning to have learners do a mini-research paper. What skills will you need to teach, so that they can do this successfully?"

"To do the mini-research paper, you'll need to teach how to evaluate whether or not a source is dependable. You'll need to teach paraphrasing and basic essay structure, and how to avoid plagiarism."

Consciousness:

Use probing questions to encourage instructors to monitor their "values, intentions, thoughts, behaviours and their effects" (Abrams, 2001, p.3).

"What are some practices you are familiar with related to formative assessment?"

"Okay. So let me go over what's important in formative assessment. First, it's important to..."

"How did you decide on the criteria in this rubric?"

"I don't know about the criteria you're using here...are these really related to their success in the task?"

"As you consider the lesson today, what are you particularly happy with?"

"I was impressed! Your group writing task and the lesson on modals went particularly well."

"If you could re-teach today's lesson, what would you do differently?"

"You needed to give learners more feedback after their presentations."

"As you reflect on how students view your role as teacher, what are some things that come to mind?"

"It seems that learners view you as the authority. They expect you to call on them, and they wait for you to give them the right answers on the worksheets (which is why they don't complete them on their own)."

Interdependence:

Use probing questions to encourage instructors to become part of the wider ESL community (Abrams, 2001, p.3).

"How could you encourage more sharing of materials between the CLB 2-4 instructors at your site?"

"You should connect with the other instructors here. If three of you developed materials for three different units, you could share the materials with each other."

"There are a few workshops at the conference on assessment. How feasible would it be to collaborate with other instructors here—maybe arrange for each of you to go to different workshops, and then share what you learned?"

"There are a few workshops on CLB assessment at the TESL Ontario conference. You should collaborate with other instructors so each of you can go to different workshops and then share what you learned."

Applying Strategy 2, 4 and 5: Using provisional language to facilitate CLB-based instruction and evidence-informed decision-making

Share good practices from your own teaching experience or from what you have observed in others.

"I'd be happy to share an idea of how to approach a needs assessment communicatively. **One thing I saw another instructor do was** use 'rotating posters' to identify needs. She grouped learners, and gave each group a piece of chart paper with a title, like 'I need English *in school* to..' or 'I need English *when shopping* to....' Groups had 5 minutes to brainstorm a list of how they needed to use English in those situations. Then she rotated the posters. The groups read what others had listed, checked off items they agreed with, and added to the list. She continued until all groups had worked on each poster. By the end, she ended up with a nice list of learner needs. **Could that work in your class?"**

"There are many approaches to gathering input on learner needs. **One thing I've done before** is an e-survey, asking learners which class activities are most useful. I find that SurveyMonkey works well."

Share principles of CLB-based instruction in a way that highlights external sources of information.

"I know what you mean. I have a difficult time assessing writing samples, too. There's a page in the *CLB 2000: A Guide to Implementation* **that I found helpful that sets out a clear process for developing criteria for success and a strategy for assessing a writing task. Do you want me to bring it in? If you like it, maybe we can try the strategy out in your class. "**

"The CLB assumes a task-based approach to teaching and assessment. Would it help to discuss task-based teaching? I've collected a few articles that really clarified for me what task-based teaching involves."

"Manitoba has developed several task-based module plans. I can download a couple for you and we can look at them next time I come if you want."

"There's a free CLB-referenced assessment resource on the BC ELSA website—it has assessment tasks for CLB 1–5, with logs for keeping track of assessment. I would be happy to share the link with you. Would you be interested in looking at it together the next time we meet?"

"The CLB Support Kit has a section on teaching pragmatics in a CLB-based program. It is based on the latest research and includes some strategies as well as sample lesson plans. Would it be helpful if I provided a summary for you? Perhaps we could take a look at the sample lesson plans together and see if there is something there that you might want to use in your class."

Useful language for the first meeting

Identifying a focus for the PD partnership

- “Is there a particular concern or issue that you’d like us to explore?”
- “If we met three times, what would be your priority?”
- “We’ll be meeting a few times in the next few weeks. What do you hope to get out of our partnership?”

Exploring and narrowing a focus

- Summarizing & paraphrasing*
- “So... you are interested in making your classes more communicative.”
 - “So you’d like to focus on formative assessment—that is, how to give feedback learners can make use of. Is that right?”
 - “Okay, so you are most interested in learning how to use the CLB—the indicators of ability—to focus your assessment. Did I get that right?”

- Probing*
- “Can you give me a little background on what sparked your decision to explore this?”
 - “What do you hope to ‘take away’ from this?”
 - “What do you already know/do related to _____?”
 - “Do you have any ideas about how you would like to go about exploring this topic?”

- Clarifying & narrowing*
- “I’m wondering if we could narrow this down a bit. Is there a particular issue related to ‘communicative teaching’ that you are interested in?”
 - “Do you want to focus more specifically on providing feedback to learners? Or is your interest more on how to assess whether or not learners have met the requirements of a particular benchmark level?”

Beginning to find a focus (where there is none to start with)

- “So... you’re not sure yet what you’d like to explore. Perhaps tell me a bit about your class and we’ll see if any focus for exploration emerges.”
 - Who are your learners?
 - What are their goals? Concerns? Needs? Challenges?
 - What is your goal as you teach the class?
 - Are there any special constraints you face in this setting?
 - What aspects of this class do you find particularly enjoyable or satisfying?
 - What do you find less satisfying or challenging?
- “What skills/content/activities do you particularly enjoy?...do you dread or avoid? Why?”
- “Have any events taken place in your class that you would like to explore in more detail?”
- “Have there been any concerns in the class that would be worth exploring?”
- “What worries you about the class? What excites you about the class?”
- “Have you been to any workshops that raised topics you’d like to explore further?”

References (PD Partner Communication Strategies)

- Abrams, J. (2001). A new way of thinking: Beginning teacher coaching through Garmston's and Costa's states of mind. *English Leadership Quarterly*, 24(1). National Council of Teachers. Retrieved from <http://www.cognitivecoaching.com/readings.htm>
- Costa, A., & Garmston, R. (1994). *Cognitive Coaching. A foundation for renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Gibbs, J.R. (1961). Supportive and defensive climates. *The Journal of Communication*, 11(3), 141–148.
- Farrell, T. (2001). Critical friendships: Colleagues helping each other develop. *ELT Journal*, 55(4), 368–374.
- Holmes, T., Kingwell, G., Pettis, J., & Pidlaski, M. (2001). *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: A guide to implementation*. Ottawa, ON: Alberta Learning and Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.
- Horn, P.J., & Metler-Armijo, K. (2011). *Toolkit for mentor practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Lipton, L. & Wellman, B. (2003). *Mentoring matters: A practical guide to learning-focused relationships* (2nd ed.). Sherman, CT: MiraVia.
- Looking at Student Work (LASW). (nd). Protocols. Retrieved from <http://www.lasw.org/protocols.html>
- Mann, S. (2005). The language teacher's development. *Language Teaching*, 38, 103–118.
- New York Comprehensive Center. (nd). Pre-coaching considerations for reflecting conversations. Mentoring language. Retrieved from http://www.nycomprehensivecenter.org/docs/form_assess/PreCoachingConsiderations.pdf

Chapter 3

Sharing Our Research



Introduction

This chapter is for LINC and adult ESL language training providers who are interested in learning more about the research that supports the PD Partner model.

This chapter:

- Shares research findings about professional development amongst LINC and Adult ESL instructors in Ontario
- Shares research findings about job-embedded professional development (JEPD)
- Presents a rationale for facilitating JEPD opportunities in language training programs, and shares strategies for incorporating JEPD
- Shares ten case study examples of promising JEPD initiatives amongst Ontario language training providers

This chapter is similar to Chapter 1 of *Moving Professional Learning to Classroom Practice: An Instructor Handbook*, but it directs strategies for incorporating JEPD opportunities into language training delivery towards administrators.

PD and LINC and Adult ESL Instructors in Ontario: What We Know from Research

Until recently, little has been known about how LINC and ESL instructors in Ontario access and engage with PD opportunities. Recent research and consultation in the field have investigated questions about the availability of PD opportunities, instructors' participation, motivation and barriers to participation, as well as the effectiveness of different forms of PD. This section will review what is known about the professional development landscape in Ontario. It will draw on research that was conducted to inform the PD Partner model as well as other relevant research studies.

The table below outlines the key Ontario sources of research. The short form citations in the left hand column will be used to refer to these studies throughout this chapter. Although these are the main studies cited, other studies are also cited; full references for all citations appear at the end of this chapter.

Relevant Ontario Studies	
TCDSB, 2011	E-survey of LINC and adult ESL administrators focusing on professional development practices; 57 respondents included about 50% community agencies, 44% school boards, 5% colleges (about 90% offered LINC; 30% offered LINC and adult ESL). Source: Toronto Catholic District School Board, unpublished.
TCDSB, 2012	Interviews with LINC and adult ESL administrators with a focus on professional development practices; 30 interviews. Source: Toronto Catholic District School Board, unpublished.
Post TESL, 2011	Research report that informed TESL Ontario's standards for the accreditation of Post-TESL Certificate Training. The report is based on multiple Ontario-wide consultations, including key informant interviews, focus groups and surveys. Survey participants included approximately 900 LINC and ESL instructors, 90 administrators and 100 learners. Source: Framework for Post TESL Certificate Training Project, unpublished.
CIC Evaluation Division, 2010	Evaluation of the Ontario LINC program based on data collected using multiple methods, including surveys from random samples of LINC instructors and learners and key informant interviews. Case studies are included on selected LINC classes. Source: www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/linc/2010/index.asp .
CCLB, 2005	E-survey conducted by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks: 240 respondents, including instructors, assessors, and administrators. The topics explored in the survey included interest in PD related to the CLB and online learning.

Most common forms of professional development (PD)

Findings from 2011 surveys and interviews of LINC and adult ESL administrators in Ontario indicate a variety of PD offerings are available and accessed by instructors in Ontario. These offerings include conferences and workshops, newsletters and journals, networking events, mentoring and support from colleagues and supervisors.

The most commonly accessed form of PD is the TESL Ontario annual conference, followed by employer-organized PD events, in-house workshops and TESL-affiliate conferences. Attendance at a neighbouring language training provider's PD event was also available to a significant number of instructors.

Conferences and workshops are also the most likely forms of PD to be employer-supported. The majority of administrators participating in the above-mentioned surveys reported that they offer financial support to attend TESL Ontario and other conferences and also provide in-house workshops on paid time. Similarly, a 2011 survey¹³ of administrators found that about 68 per cent offered release time and 64 per cent offered financial support to attend TESL Ontario or other conferences. In addition, 60 per cent of the surveyed administrators offered some internal workshops on paid time.



In response to questions about the take-up rate of professional development opportunities and possible reasons for this rate, the dominant theme among administrator responses was the relationship between take-up and the ability to offer PD on paid time: When it is paid (which often translates to mandatory), the take-up rate is often 100 per cent, but take-up is significantly lower on unpaid time.

In addition to conferences and workshops, a variety of other forms of PD are offered, such as newsletters, access to various resources, induction programs, staff meetings and mentoring. In interviews,¹⁴ administrators described creative arrangements they made to ensure instructors had access to professional development opportunities to support their classroom practice, some of which are described in the case studies later in this chapter. However, many of these arrangements required that instructors participate on their own time, or on very limited amounts of paid time.

Overall, interviews¹⁵ with administrators across Ontario revealed a great deal of variation in terms of availability and access to PD for instructors, a lack of policy to ensure consistent PD offerings, and a concern (on the part of administrators) about the ability to continue to offer a range of PD opportunities. There was also an overwhelmingly positive response to the opportunity to share best practices in PD and to learn more about the PD practices of language training providers in Ontario.

¹³ Post TESL, 2011.

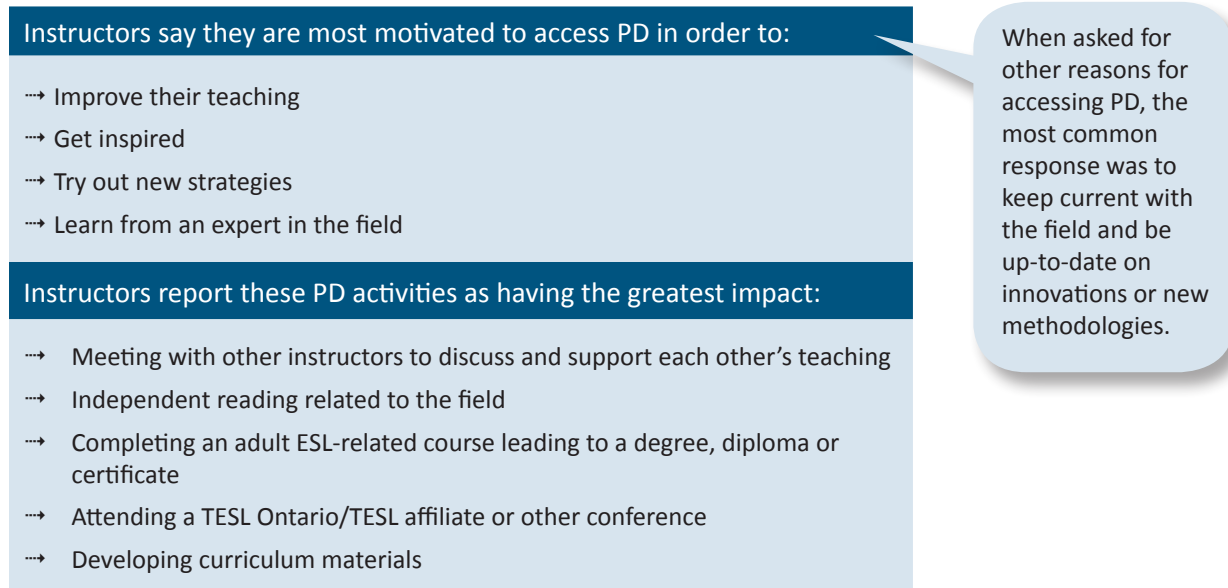
¹⁴ TCDSB, 2012.

¹⁵ TCDSB, 2012.

Most effective PD activities

The 2011 survey¹⁶ of Ontario LINC and Adult ESL instructors' perspectives on professional development explored two aspects of PD: factors that motivate instructors to pursue PD activities, and the impact of PD activities on classroom practice (listed in the chart below).

Instructor perspectives



Administrator perspectives

A survey of administrators¹⁷ revealed considerable agreement about what constitutes the most effective PD for instructors. The top factor connected to PD success was identified as “relevant and targeted content” — that is, PD that is immediately useful to instructors in their classrooms and responds to their stated interests in professional learning. The second factor was defined as “opportunities to dialogue with other ESL professionals to discuss challenges, share best practices, reflect on their own practices, and make connections across contexts and programs to avoid an ‘insular’ perspective.”¹⁸

In a separate survey¹⁹ that asked administrators to characterize supports offered to encourage instructor access to and participation in PD, offering PD on paid time was the most common support offered, with 71 per cent of respondents describing an arrangement that allowed instructors paid time for PD. Sometimes, funding challenges did not allow for all instructors to participate in paid PD at the same time, and creative arrangements were described. Almost one-quarter of respondents commented on the benefits of actively sharing information with instructors about available PD opportunities.

In interviews²⁰ with administrators, a recurring theme was instructor interest in time for professional sharing. Many of the examples of job-embedded PD that administrators shared during the interviews describe ways in which they had facilitated time for instructors to talk together, for example sharing best practices or favourite conference sessions in staff meetings.

¹⁶ Post TESL, 2011.

¹⁷ Post TESL, 2011.

¹⁸ Post TESL, 2011, p. 37.

¹⁹ TCDSB, 2011.

²⁰ TCDSB, 2012.

Priority topics for PD

There has been a fair amount of agreement on the topics of priority across different surveys identifying instructors' and administrators' preferences for instructor PD. For example:

- A 2011 survey of 900 Ontario LINC and adult ESL instructors²¹ ranked the top five content areas as:
 - Teaching pronunciation
 - Implementing language assessment in the classroom
 - Developing curriculum
 - Teaching advanced level speaking skills
 - Using technology inside and outside the classroom
- A survey of 89 administrators²² found the top five content areas were ranked by administrators as:
 - Implementing language assessment in the classroom
 - Planning lessons/designing syllabi
 - Assessing learner needs
 - Teaching pronunciation
 - Developing curricula

Learner priorities

Of over 7,500 learners surveyed in an Ontario Adult ESL/FSL non-credit learner survey, 62% reported speaking as the skill they *most* want to improve (18% reported listening, 16% writing, 4% reported reading).

In the LINC program and the Adult ESL program in Ontario, the most frequently mentioned suggestion for improvement (among surveyed learners) related to more in-class conversation.

(Adult non-credit ESL/FSL non-credit learner survey: 2010; CIC Evaluation Division, 2010)

Another significant priority area, identified in both LINC and adult ESL evaluations, is having access to quality instructional materials. In the LINC 2010 evaluation, one of the leading recommendations from instructors on how to improve LINC was “better resources/learning materials.”²³ When asked about weaknesses in the LINC program, the leading response was “lack of up-to-date resources.”²⁴

ESL literacy and high-needs learners

Other research in the field has highlighted the need for instructors to be better-equipped to serve high-needs learners, including ESL literacy learners and those experiencing learning disabilities or suffering from trauma. For example, in a 2006 survey²⁵ that focused on “high-needs learners” (defined diversely as experiencing learning disabilities, extreme poverty, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, memory issues, lack of concentration, or unmet child-minding needs), of the 300 LINC instructors surveyed, almost two-thirds felt that they did not have “adequate opportunities to acquire additional job knowledge related to “high-need” learners on an ongoing basis (e.g., attending seminars, reading job-related periodicals, consultations with colleagues, etc.).” In another study that reviewed the ESL Literacy program, over 95 per cent of LINC program coordinators and instructors surveyed were requesting “regularly scheduled PD opportunities” and PD that addressed challenges related to serving the needs of ESL literacy learners, such as online training and a discussion board, greater networking opportunities, informal discussion with colleagues and mentoring.²⁶

²¹ Post TESL, 2011.

²² Post TESL, 2011.

²³ CIC Evaluation Division, 2011, p. 61.

²⁴ CIC Evaluation Division, 2011, p. 63.

²⁵ Howard Barton & Associates, 2006, p. 27; 31.

²⁶ Jangles Productions, 2006, p. 30.

Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)

Findings from a 2005 CCLB scan²⁷ of the online professional development needs and interests of those working in the language training field (including instructors, assessors and administrators) highlight interest in the CLB as content for PD, and interest in online learning:

- Almost all 240 survey participants expressed interest in online professional learning.
- There was interest in PD regarding the CLB both from those who had already received training in it and from those who had not received any training.

Barriers to engaging in professional development

Research in the Ontario context has revealed some systemic barriers to PD. The professional development experiences of LINC and ESL instructors are influenced by the nature of the field and its funding structures. Frequently cited challenges to engaging in PD are lack of time and the contractual nature of employment in the field, which is related to the larger funding structures. Among LINC instructors, a minority (39 per cent) are permanent employees, with the remainder mainly employed in temporary or contractual positions, often teaching in more than one program.²⁸

In a 2011 survey,²⁹ over 900 Ontario LINC and ESL instructors identified the following five factors as the most significant barriers to their participation in PD, four of which are time-related:

- The need to travel outside of their local area
- Family commitments
- Conflicts with their work schedules
- The requirement to pay fees
- Having no available time outside of work hours

Regarding financial constraints, the findings of an informal CCLB survey are in line with the barriers identified above. When considering the option of accessing online training on the CLB, more than half of the survey respondents expected that their employer would pay for the online PD. Only 20 per cent of respondents were willing to pay for the course out of their own pockets.³⁰

Finally, a barrier to professional development that is not often considered was revealed in the survey of over 900 instructors cited above. When asked to identify barriers to PD other than the ones they ranked, the issues of quality and relevance were raised: 21 per cent felt that past PD events they had attended had not been relevant to their practice or had been lacking in quality; another 6 per cent had not been able to access PD in a content area of interest.³¹

These themes of quality and relevance will be at the forefront of the section that follows, which focuses on defining quality PD and the benefits of job-embedded professional development (JEPD).

²⁷ CCLB, 2005.

²⁸ CIC Evaluation Division, 2010, p. 60.

²⁹ Post TESL, 2011.

³⁰ CCLB, 2005.

³¹ Post TESL, 2011.

JEPD as a Promising Practice

Defining JEPD

As the name suggests, Job-Embedded PD is professional development that is “embedded” into an instructor’s day-to-day work. Early proponents of JEPD defined it as “learning that occurs as educators engage in their daily work activities”³² and as PD that “is based on the assumption that the most powerful learning is that which occurs in response to the challenges currently being faced by the learner and that allows for immediate application, experimentation, and adaptation on the job.”³³ This approach to PD is intended to enhance and complement current forms of PD, such as workshops and conferences. It is characterized by a number of distinct features, including the following:

- It is highly flexible and can be customized to instructors’ needs. It can be formal or informal, and includes activities such as discussion with others, peer coaching, team teaching, instructor study groups and action research.
- It is inspired and directed by actual classroom issues and challenges experienced by instructors.
- It supports reflective practice, increasingly recognized as key to teacher development.
- It increases the time instructors engage in PD because it is embedded in daily practice.

Job-embedded PD has the potential to increase the influence of learning on teacher practice. Application of learning is part of the process as each stage builds on what instructors are learning during PD engagement.

While JEPD has been a promising practice in K–12 education since the 1990s, it has gained momentum in recent years, mainly due to the growing body of research that supports its implementation. For example, research has shown that the best professional learning occurs when instructors collaborate with their peers; this collaborative learning can also counteract the reality of teaching as a somewhat isolated profession.³⁴

Other research has found that PD activities have greater potential to bring about changes in practice (and in some cases, student learning) when they include the application of teacher knowledge to instruction.³⁵ Other research in K–12 education has found a necessary threshold for the amount of time spent engaging in PD before it has an impact on student outcomes. A range of 30 to 100 hours over the course of a year led to some change in student outcomes, whereas PD that totalled 5 to 14 hours “showed no statistically significant effect on student learning.”³⁶

	Traditional PD	Job-Embedded PD
Primary Goal	Increase teacher knowledge, skills and teaching competency	Improve student learning, help teachers with specific teaching problems they face
Location	Mostly off-site	Mostly at teaching site
Formats	Workshops, seminars, conferences	Study circles, practitioner research, inquiry projects, mentoring, team teaching
Content	Range of knowledge and skills teachers should know/be able to do (competencies, special issues, new approaches to teaching, using new curricula)	Student thinking and learning (examining student work, consulting learners to gain insight into needs and how to improve instruction), teaching problems
Application	Often left to teacher to undertake after the PD has been delivered	Application is part of JEPD, so occurs simultaneously with learning

Adapted from Smith and Gillespie, 2007, p. 15

³² Wood & Killian, 1998, p. 52.

³³ Sparks & Hirsh, 1997, p. 52.

³⁴ OLNS, 2007.

³⁵ Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2007.

³⁶ Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 9.

A rationale for job-embedded PD

One of the most compelling reasons for supporting JEPD is its close relation with how adults learn. The instructor's involvement in setting the learning agenda for JEPD is highly compatible with principles of adult education.³⁷ Adult learning scholar Knowles argues that adults "learn new knowledge, understandings, skills, values, and attitudes most effectively when they are presented in the context of applications to real life situations."³⁸ JEPD is often referred to as "content in context": It "does not ask, 'what am I going to teach you?' but 'what work do you do?' and 'what do you need?'"³⁹ Relevance and application to the instructor's real life teaching context are primary features of JEPD.

Based on its compatibility with adult learning principles, it is not surprising that JEPD shares commonalities with many statements of best practices related to professional development in TESL and education, such as PD that is:

- More sustained than one-time workshops
- Compatible with theories of adult learning
- Collaborative and creates learning communities
- Built on an instructor's own knowledge
- Applied, with new knowledge actively connected to the "real world"
- Focused on improving student learning
- Based on needs assessment that involves the instructors themselves
- Practice- and feedback-driven

Researchers and those involved in JEPD do list other benefits of JEPD, one of which is that, because it is often interactive and communal, JEPD can transform an organizational culture and make a program more of a learning community; this can ultimately increase the expertise of instructors within the organization and the overall capacity of the program.

Job-embedded professional learning addresses teacher isolation by providing opportunities for shared teacher inquiry, study and classroom-based research. Such collaborative professional learning motivates teachers to act on issues related to curriculum programming, instruction, assessment and student learning. It promotes reflective practice and results in teachers working smarter, not harder. Overall, job-embedded professional learning builds capacity for instructional improvement and leadership.⁴⁰

Cautions in JEPD implementation

A key aspect of JEPD is that it can provide feedback on the practice of new skills or the application of new knowledge. For this to happen, it is important that instructors "trust the process, their colleagues, and themselves. Teachers need to know that feedback will be constructive, not personal."⁴¹ To reap the benefits of JEPD, attention must be paid to the quality of its process; this implies the need for some initial training to ensure that it is implemented effectively.

Another key consideration in the implementation of JEPD is *time*: can an administrator find time during instructors' work days for a reading group or for peer coaching? What kinds of policies, either within the

³⁷ Corley, 2003.

³⁸ p. 61, as cited in Zepeda, 2012, p. 124.

³⁹ Rae and Driscoll, 2004, as cited in Zepeda, 2012, p. 123.

⁴⁰ OLNS, 2007, p. 1–2.

⁴¹ Zepeda, 2012, p. 126.

organization or from the union (if relevant), might create challenges? Successfully implementing JEPD may require the “creative use of human resources.”⁴² Practical tips that appear later in this chapter show how LINC and adult ESL administrators have been creative in the delivery of PD.

Reflective practice and JEPD

There is a natural and logical connection between job-embedded professional development and reflective practice. Many common JEPD activities (such as reflective logs, action research, peer coaching and lesson study) rely on a strong element of reflection. Chapter 1 of this guide discussed a reflective method and a model of JEPD that can be used for moving professional learning into the classroom. This method is based on the reflective cycle of action research, and is a useful tool to facilitate JEPD.

Farrell defines reflective practice in the language teaching field as the following: “Reflective language teaching involves teachers systematically gathering data about their teaching and using this information to make informed decisions about their practice.”⁴³ The importance of reflection is a recurring theme in many statements of best practice in the literature about effective PD. For example, in its *Framework for Quality Professional Development for Practitioners Working With Adult English Language Learners*, The Center for Applied Linguistics (2010) draws on numerous research studies to emphasize that in quality professional development, the “sessions are not an isolated event but rather are followed up by ongoing opportunities for reflection and practice.”⁴⁴ Similarly, the Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat states that “effective professional learning... must be grounded in inquiry and reflection, be participant-driven, and focus on improving planning and instruction.”⁴⁵

There is a strong logic to the connection between reflective practice and JEPD, which is rooted in the principles of adult education and how adults learn. Early leaders in the field have argued that:

*People learn best through active involvement and through thinking about and becoming articulate about what they have learned. Processes, practices, and policies built on this view of learning are at the heart of a more expanded view of teacher development that encourages teachers to involve themselves as learners—in much the same way as they wish their students would.*⁴⁶

This early emphasis on active involvement and thinking is supported by others who, summarizing the research in traditional professional development, conclude that it can be more effective when it includes “a strong emphasis on analysis and reflection, rather than just demonstrating techniques.”⁴⁷

Farrell identifies several potential benefits of reflective practice for language instructors, including increased confidence, more informed decision-making, support for the critical examination of teaching practice, the development of strategies for change, and an enhanced sense of professionalism.⁴⁸

⁴² Zepeda, 2012, p. 144.

⁴³ Farrell, 2007, p. 13.

⁴⁴ Center for Applied Linguistics, 2010, p. 9.

⁴⁵ OLNS, 2007, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Lieberman, Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 592 as cited in Sparks and Hirsch, 1997, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon, & Rowe, 2003, p. 14.

⁴⁸ Farrell, 2007, p. 13.

JEPD in LINC and adult ESL programs

Following a widely distributed e-survey in 2011, the Toronto Catholic district School Board conducted a series of interviews with in language training program across Ontario. Both the survey and interviews yielded promising PD activities that were aligned with job-embedded professional development. The following pages summarize several of these PD practices and share strategies for implementing them. The PD practices are summarized under four headings:

- Conferences, workshops and other PD events
- Orientation/Induction programs for newly hired instructors
- Mentoring, coaching and peer support
- Supervision and support

Ten case studies follow the summaries of PD practices and offer examples of how a range of training providers in Ontario have implemented JEPD. Contact names are included in each case study for readers who would like more information on a specific PD practice.

Conferences, workshops and PD events

Conferences, workshops and other PD events currently represent the majority of PD activities that are accessed by LINC and adult ESL instructors in Ontario. This includes the TESL Ontario conference, TESL affiliate conferences, and employer-organized (internal) PD days, workshops or events.

Background

TESL Ontario conference: The annual three-day TESL Ontario conference is open to anyone to register; however, the fees can be a barrier to participation for some instructors. In addition to the cost of the conference, attending a conference day can involve taking a day off work. Many language training providers build attendance-related costs into their budgets. In addition, funders provide support: In 2011, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) subsidized the attendance of 750 instructors; The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) subsidized the attendance of 250 adult ESL instructors. To access this funding, typically instructors themselves apply for it.

TESL Ontario affiliate events: The 12 TESL Ontario affiliates, listed on the Affiliates section of the TESL Ontario website, are regional volunteer organizations that facilitate PD opportunities and communication amongst their membership. Each TESL affiliate offers at least one annual conference or professional development event. As the top barrier identified by instructors to participation in PD is the requirement to travel outside of their local area, attending a local affiliate PD event is worth promoting by employers. Affiliate conferences are less costly than the provincial conference, and often take place in the evening or on a Saturday.

In-house workshops: Research⁴⁹ shows that many language training providers (60 per cent of those surveyed) offer workshops or professional learning events internally on paid time. In addition, attending a neighbouring agency's PD event is possible for a significant number of instructors (almost 30 per cent of this survey sample).

⁴⁹ TCDSB, 2011.

Strategies for increasing access and participation

Training program administrators identified a number of strategies for increasing access to and participation in professional development. Some reflect creative solutions for offering in-house PD events with limited funds. Two key strategies stand out as common and effective in increasing access to and participation in conferences, workshops and PD events:

- a) Offer PD on paid time: 71 per cent of administrators interviewed described an arrangement that allowed instructors paid time for PD. When funding challenges did not allow for all instructors to participate in paid PD at the same time, creative arrangements were described.
- b) Actively share information with instructors about available PD opportunities: Almost a quarter of respondents commented on the benefits of sharing information.

Below are some examples that illustrate the range of strategies used to provide access to and encourage participation in conference and workshop opportunities.

TESL Ontario and TESL affiliates

- Facilitate the TESL Ontario subsidy application process by informing instructors of the procedures, dates and locations (e.g., by providing a URL) of the subsidy applications.
- Offer to cover the cost of a supply instructor for one day of the TESL Ontario conference.
- Offer to cover the cost of a supply instructor for one day of the TESL Ontario conference *every other year* per instructor (by alternating staff yearly, most can attend every two years).
- Advertise the TESL Ontario conference and TESL affiliate PD events through internal means (e.g., in a staff newsletter, memo, email tree, Intranet, staff room bulletin board, or by phoning instructors).

In-house workshops

- Offer monthly workshops for which instructors are paid to attend for a limited time (e.g., five hours), with additional hours of attendance voluntary and unpaid.
- Offer incentives (other than paid time) for attending workshops or PD events, such as a certificate of attendance, refreshments or a meal, or a draw for a prize at the event.
- Arrange for sharing time for instructors; this may be a brief sharing of best practices during a staff meeting, with the option of longer meetings during unpaid time.
- For school board language training providers, provide LINC and adult ESL instructors access to relevant workshops offered by the K–12 sector.
- Network with other language training providers to find out about PD workshop opportunities (e.g., good presenters, low- to no-cost workshops).
- Partner with other language training providers to share PD workshops or events (e.g., inviting each other's staff to attend).
- Capitalize on existing expertise among staff and offer incentives to sharing that expertise, such as:
 - Paid time (e.g., 5–10 hours) to develop and deliver an in-house workshop
 - A certificate of recognition (e.g., recognized by TESL Ontario as contributing towards the five hours of PD required per year to maintain accreditation)
 - Support and assistance from supervisory staff in developing a workshop
 - Encouragement from senior staff to share expertise in-house to gain the experience needed to present externally (such as at TESL Ontario conference) at a later date
- Conduct a needs assessment of staff interests; collect suggestions for workshop topics in order to target PD towards staff needs.

Strategies for moving knowledge gained from workshops into classroom practice

Many of the strategies described by administrators relate to instructors applying knowledge gained in workshops and conferences to their classrooms, and reflect practices in JEPD.

- Before the conference, encourage instructors to set learning goals and cooperate with each other to attend sessions that are being offered in the same time slots.
- If paid time is available for staff meetings, use some meeting time to share materials or knowledge gained at a recent conference.
- View (then discuss) a podcast of a particularly relevant conference session in a staff meeting. This enables all staff to benefit from a workshop even if the budget or schedule does not allow them to physically attend.
- Make a folder available in a staff room where instructors can place copies of useful handouts received at a workshop for others to review. Instructors can include their names on the materials so that colleagues who want more information will know who to ask.
- Use a staff Intranet, wiki or email tree to share information, notes or handouts from conference sessions.

Orientation/Induction programs

Background

Termed “Orientation **Programs**” or “New Teacher Induction Programs,” these programs aim to provide newly hired instructors with strong starts in new positions. An induction program can introduce an instructor to an organization’s key policies, procedures, performance expectations and valued core teaching skills.

The content and approach of induction programs vary. Some are composed of workshops, some have an element of support that includes meetings with a mentor or discussions in an online environment, and still others combine these approaches. Research has found that induction programs appear to help retain new teachers, particularly when mentors in the same teaching area are assigned to them and opportunities for collaboration and networking are regularly scheduled.⁵⁰ Induction programs characterized as “collegial” and “job-embedded” have been found to be more effective for novice teachers than workshops.⁵¹

A survey of administrators with Ontario language training providers found that almost a third of them offered some kind of orientation program for newly hired instructors. Selected comments from the survey provide a sense of the range of offerings:

⁵⁰ Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004, as cited in Darling-Hammond et al, 2009.

⁵¹ Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008.

-
- *The agency always provides a new staff orientation session to equip staff with work-related policies and practices.*
 - *New teachers (or those who need a refresher) take part in a 4-part LINC Basics Series, learn about CLB, lesson planning, assessment and CALL. This practice is effective because it orients new teachers to the profession as well as the philosophy in the region.*
 - *Unique circumstances provided an opportunity for a new hire to visit each site, meet other team members and visit their classes. Both sides were in agreement that this was beneficial and should be made a best practice.*
-

Strategies for offering an induction program

The following strategies, based on the experiences of Ontario language training provider administrators, may offer some guidance to administrators who want to start or enhance an induction program.

Assess the needs of newly hired instructors

Research shows that PD is most effective when it is designed to meet specific, local needs.⁵² Identifying these needs can ensure that the PD offered is closely aligned with them. A needs assessment does not necessarily create a large administrative burden. Here are some suggestions for assessing new instructors' needs:

- Ask more experienced instructors to email suggestions for content they wish they had known more about during their first year with the program.
- Ask program supervisors to reflect on any trends in the challenges new instructors seem to face after they join the program.
- Review performance evaluations of newer instructors for trends in challenges.
- Review learner evaluations to identify areas of improvement or opportunities for instructor learning (for newer instructors or for all instructional staff).
- Assess whether or not a small enhancement could be added to what is already offered—such as posting helpful documents or resource links on a staff Intranet, wiki or Moodle space. (A wiki or Moodle space has the added advantage of allowing for collaboration—instructors can post and respond to questions, challenges, comments or resource suggestions.)
- If the current induction program is more traditional in nature (such as a half-day information workshop), consider a job-embedded enhancement, such as an online discussion board (as above).
- Have a program supervisor or experienced instructor provide mentoring or observational support.
- Ask instructors who participate in an existing induction program to evaluate its effectiveness and provide suggestions for enhancements.

Peer mentoring, coaching and team teaching

There is a degree of overlap between job-embedded PD practices, which are often comprised of mentoring, coaching or peer support, and more traditional forms of PD, such as workshops. For example, a new teacher induction workshop could be followed by mentoring or peer support. Similarly, attendance at a workshop can be augmented by initiatives that support instructors' efforts to move the information learned into the classroom. These initiatives can involve informal mentoring by more experienced instructors, peer support, peer coaching, or formal or informal learning groups.

⁵² Corley, 2003; Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010; Schaetzel, Peyton, & Burt, 2007.

The literature is full of examples of the benefits of peer support. For example, in an early study on JEPD, researchers focused on elementary schools that had achieved impressive gains in instruction and student achievement. An examination of three such schools found an array of JEPD practices, including the following:

- Peer coaching: “Formal peer coaching programs were implemented where teachers helped peers implement new instructional practices learned during staff development programs. Both those who had been coaches and those being served said this experience helped them learn and implement new professional practice.”
- Informal peer observations: During their daily planning period, instructors at one school were required to observe a colleague teach for at least 15 minutes, then write a note to this colleague highlighting two or three “good instructional practices” they had observed. Initial anxiousness about this idea was soon replaced by praise for its value and the “positive practical learning” it inspired.
- Mentoring of teachers: Here, the researchers define mentoring as support offered by one instructor with a strength or expertise in a particular area to another instructor who has less knowledge in that area.
- Study groups: These groups were used to “solve a problem or pilot a new program or instructional strategy.”⁵³

There has been little to no sufficiently rigorous research on the impacts of mentoring on instruction and learner outcomes. The research to date has relied on teachers’ own reports of self-improvement. While researchers acknowledge that “coaching, mentoring, and induction can be justified on common-sense grounds, the jury remains out as to their effectiveness or the conditions under which they are most likely to be effective.”⁵⁴ However, the researchers report that positive impacts from peer support, such as mentoring, have been observed in numerous evaluations.

Strategies for offering peer-driven JEPD

Mentoring/Coaching

For LINC and adult ESL instructors in Ontario, access to mentoring or coaching can be limited and is often somewhat connected to supervision. In many contexts, instructors who wish to receive coaching that is separate from performance evaluation may need to organize it themselves.

Instructors who have worked with a coach or mentor report the following benefits: gaining new insights into their teaching practice; learning about new resources; learning a new skill, such as using a new technology; feeling confident to conduct a new assessment; solving a perplexing problem related to their learners.⁵⁵

Strategies for facilitating coaching or mentoring include the following:

- Explore external sources of funding that can support the development of a mentoring or coaching program. For example, the Toronto District School Board LINC and Adult ESL program benefitted from a funding source related to the “Provincial Discussion Table” collective bargaining and used the funds for a mentoring pilot program that provided release time for the instructors involved.
- Build forms of peer support into existing procedures. For example, at one center, instructors use a checklist of classroom skills to set their own professional learning goals at the beginning of each instructional year (at a staff meeting). Later in the year, instructors write a reflection on the process, detailing their successes, challenges and lessons learned.

⁵³ All examples and quotes here are from Wood & Killian, 1998, p. 53.

⁵⁴ Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p. 12.

⁵⁵ TCDSB PD Partner piloting data; Wood & Killian, 1998; Wood & McQuarrie, 1999.

- Encourage informal coaching or mentoring where it is most strategic. For example:
 - Move the classroom of a struggling instructor closer to that of a stronger instructor to encourage informal communication between the two.
 - Encourage instructors who may need knowledge in a particular area to seek out a coaching relationship with another instructor who has that expertise. This can build a team approach amongst instructional staff. One administrator who offers this kind of encouragement observes:

“I think it’s critical—professional development. It’s something that I encourage all my teachers to participate in as much as possible. I think that if you don’t have that encouragement from administration, then it’s not going to happen.... I think that administration has to look at thinking outside the box around the PD to find ways to make it happen without costing money or without affecting your budget.”⁵⁶

Learning groups

“Instructor learning groups” refers to instructors coming together for the purpose of professional learning or sharing. By joining forces, instructors can support each other’s professional development while learning together. A learning group’s focus will depend on the interests of the instructors involved—for example, a group could concentrate on sharing best practices related to a particular area, or on exploring the research on a chosen topic. Strategies for facilitating learning groups include:

- Set up discussion time during staff meetings: When instituted on an ongoing basis, a discussion period dedicated to supporting PD can become a form of a learning group. One example of this is designating a specific staff meeting to allow instructors to share their knowledge of promising practices gained from the TESL Ontario conference. Follow-up meeting time can focus on discussing the ongoing implementation of this knowledge in their classrooms.
- Encourage learning groups to operate on paid time: For example, for one program, release time for instructors can be offered by arranging settlement-related presentations (e.g., from settlement staff or from external presenters) for learners. During the presentations, instructors set an objective and work to produce materials for their classrooms.
- Encourage learning groups to operate on unpaid time: For example, instructors at one program established an “ESL literacy circle.” The circle met monthly, outside of work hours, with about 15 instructors involved.

⁵⁶ TCDSB, 2012.

Observation

One tool for facilitating job-embedded PD is classroom observation and feedback. An instructor's class can be observed by a peer instructor, a supervisor or a support staff person in a non-supervisory role. Research has identified a number of potential benefits of classroom observation for instructors, including:

- The opportunity to develop more self-awareness
- The ability to collect information that would ordinarily not be available while in the midst of teaching
- Receiving constructive feedback
- Building collegiality at the program or site
- Learning (for a peer observer) about how a colleague uses instructional strategies and deals with classroom challenges⁵⁷

Observation by a supervisor

In many cases, classroom observation is conducted by a supervisor and is associated with performance evaluation. Whether or not supervisor observation leads successfully to professional development depends on a number of factors, including: the policies and practices that govern the evaluation process; the supervisor's knowledge and communication skills; and the relationship between the instructor and supervisor.

Many LINC and adult ESL instructors are evaluated through observation every two to three years by a program supervisor. A number of surveyed administrators recognize the learning potential offered by supervisory observation and evaluation. Here are a few of their comments:

-
- *Performance Evaluation is probably the single most effective tool to individually identify what an instructor needs regarding PD. Otherwise, it is listening to what the instructors are talking about.*
 - *[One promising practice is] job-embedded formal mentoring. [One] Instructor and a supervisor teamed up to work on a specific teaching issue to support the instructors' program delivery.*
 - *Teachers receive direct, job-specific feedback about their own performance.*
-

Strategies for including JEPD in performance evaluation

Communication is an important factor in ensuring that observation for performance evaluation includes an element of job-embedded PD. An emphasis on adding a formative or developmental observation process prior to or following a performance evaluation can increase instructors' buy-in and ultimately improve results. Farrell cites research that emphasizes the benefits of non-evaluative observation and outlines strategies for effective evaluation. The latter includes presenting the visit as a shared opportunity to brainstorm solutions to challenges or interests, as well as using "nonjudgmental description of classroom events that can be analyzed and given interpretation,"⁵⁸ ideally in a collaborative way.

In situations where observation is conducted for performance evaluation, administrators can take steps to clarify the purpose and process of the evaluation and its relation (if any) to JEPD, for example by communicating clear answers to the following instructor questions:

⁵⁷ Adapted from Farrell, 2007, p. 135.

⁵⁸ Gebhard, 1999, p. 35, as cited in Farrell, 2007, p. 134.

What is the purpose of the evaluation? Ensure that instructors understand the purpose of the evaluation and the ramifications of its outcome on their employment.

- *How am I being evaluated?* Ensure that instructors understand on what basis their teaching is being evaluated. Well in advance of the observation, discuss the process and the tool/s to be used.
- *What are my rights?* Inform instructors about follow-up or appeal processes in the event of a negative evaluation.
- *How can I prepare?* Inform instructors about what can help them prepare for observation, such as the required elements of a lesson plan; what can be submitted ahead of time; whether (and why) they are notified of the observation date; whether evaluation builds on previous observations; and whether or not they can participate in a pre- or post-observation reflection or goal-setting process.
- *Is there non-evaluative observation or support prior to a performance evaluation?*
- *Is there follow-up support?* Ensure that instructors are aware of pre- or post-evaluation supports available to them if an area of their teaching is identified as needing improvement. Offering follow-up support emphasizes a developmental—and job-embedded—approach to observation and evaluation.

The use of self-reflection to prepare for evaluation was shared as a promising practice by more than one Ontario language training provider. Self-reflection can take the form of a document or form that guides an instructor in evaluating their instructional practices in specific areas of performance. A formal and guided pre-reflection process gives instructors an opportunity to reflect on their performance and can help them to set learning goals related to specific standards of quality instruction. It can also create a basis for dialogue with a supervisor.

Strategies for offering non-evaluative observation

By a supervisor

Non-evaluative observation by a supervisor can be a strong form of job-embedded PD when it centres on supporting an individual instructor's learning needs. Following are some strategies administrators can use to help focus an observation on instructor needs:

- For administrators with multiple supervisors, consider consulting with instructors on their preference regarding whether or not their direct supervisor should conduct non-evaluative observations.
- Provide non-evaluative follow-up support after a performance evaluation; this can help give the process a more job-embedded emphasis.
- Clarify with instructors the procedural differences between an evaluative and non-evaluative observation.
- Focus non-evaluative observations and feedback on an instructor-identified interest or goal, and ensure follow-up opportunities to share what was learned from the observation.
- Offer training to supervisory staff on non-evaluative observation and non-evaluative communication strategies.
- Offer opportunities for instructors to share their preferences (and suggestions for improvement) about observational procedures.

By a non-supervisor

A small number of instructors in Ontario have access to a staff person who provides non-evaluative, non-supervisory support. This support may include observation or curriculum support. There are a number of strategies that can help make this kind of position successful:

- Access funding. For example, for one organization, a funding boost allowed for the creation of a half-time resource staff person.
- Join forces with other language training providers. For example, in Peel–Halton region, one full-time position provides non-evaluative support to over 250 instructors and represents a shared resource for 23 organizations. Administrators can consider the possibility of cooperating in a regional request for a similar resource.
- Creatively combine duties. For example, one organization strategically combines the duties of volunteer coordination and resource support to instructors in one staff position. This staff person reports that through her dual role, she learns a great deal about instructor needs and can address them by offering resource support, curriculum support or volunteers.
- Emphasize non-evaluative support visits. A non-supervisory support staff person can provide an opportunity to increase instructors' comfort levels with frequent and less formal observation. One administrator observed that having a resource staff person conduct frequent and ongoing classroom visits to offer support to instructors creates a collegial and unthreatening approach to support.

The next section provides case studies of promising JEPD initiatives, allowing for a more detailed examination of the many ways in which diverse job-embedded approaches have been successfully implemented by specific language training providers in Ontario.

Case Studies of JEPD Initiatives

On the following pages, job-embedded PD initiatives are shared in brief case studies. They illustrate just some of the many professional development initiatives that Ontario LINC and adult ESL administrators shared during interviews⁵⁹. Each case study includes contact details for administrators who would like further information about particular initiatives. The PD Partner initiative is included as the final case study.

Case studies of job-embedded PD initiatives

A new instructor orientation program.....	75
A peer mentoring program.....	76
An ESL Literacy circle	77
A conference sharing forum	78
Going high-tech by sharing expertise	79
A shared Curriculum and Training Coordinator	80
“Working workshops” to produce classroom materials	81
A Resource and Volunteer Coordinator position	82
A goal-setting process.....	83
Experimenting with a model of class organization	84
A peer coaching model: the PD Partner initiative	85

⁵⁹ TCDSB, 2012.

A new instructor orientation program

An orientation program for newly hired instructors can provide more than an organizational orientation. At the Toronto Catholic District School Board, the existing orientation procedure was enhanced to include an element of teacher development. The new program originated from a supervisor's observation that one of the key challenges with newly hired instructors was ensuring that they included all the elements of a lesson plan that are considered necessary to be effective in the school board program. She decided to supplement the initial 75-minute orientation with an additional two-hour "mock lesson" session.

How does it work?

During the mock lesson session, each new hire designs a competency- and task-based, learner-centered lesson and teaches it for 20 minutes in front of a group of other new hires and the administrator. An assessment tool is used to identify key elements in the lesson, including the use of tasks that are related to real life situations, a logical progression in the lesson, and effective use of pair, group and individual work. After each new instructor teaches the lesson, the others offer constructive feedback. The group participants complete an evaluation form after the orientation to reflect on their experience and what they learned from it.

What are the results?

The expanded orientation has resulted in significant benefits, including instructors' increased confidence in the classroom and a better appreciation of the process. The supervisor reports on the results from evaluations: "It came back as a very positive experience: they [the new teachers] felt they had really learned from their peers, they appreciated my input, and they said it gave them an idea about what a [supervisor's] job was and how they would be interacting with [one] in the future." One participant reported that, "A few suggestions have been provided on how the lesson could be improved and I really appreciate this as well. Once again, it made me realize how sometimes we get fixated on certain exercises or methods of delivering material, and due to time constraints or inflexibility, rarely introduce new things into our teaching. This will definitely help me diversify my teaching."

FACILITATING FACTORS

- A supervisor who identifies an area of performance that could be improved and is willing to address it with initiatives and evaluate its results
- Adequate flexibility in the supervisor's schedule to allow her to allocate time to preparing the necessary tools and engage in the process
- Hiring practices that allow for multiple hires to work together rather than in isolation
- A job model that allows supervisors to take on a dual role of support and supervision for new hires

Contact information: Eileen Paulsen, Program Consultant,
Toronto Catholic District School Board; eileen.paulsen@tcdsb.org.

A peer mentoring program

Toronto District School Board implemented a peer mentoring project for one unit of adult ESL/LINC instructors. It was a professional development initiative based on a mentoring/coaching approach that provided an opportunity for LINC/ESL instructors to visit another instructor's classroom at a different site, and for pairs of instructors to share ideas, resources and strategies on a particular aspect of ESL instruction in a classroom setting.

How did it work?

The project was developed jointly by the TDSB and CUPE 4400, with funding provided by the province as part of the Provincial Discussion Table Agreement. The overall objective was to promote reflective teaching in an adult ESL environment through peer mentoring. The model was adapted from a similar program offered at Hamline University, Wisconsin.

The mentoring process methodology was developed over a five-month period, and included exploring excellence in teaching, the concepts of effective mentoring, the mutual benefits of mentoring and coaching, the planning continuum, and the ESL classroom. The project consisted of a four-stage process, including:

1. **Identification of mentors and protégés:** An application process with selection criteria identified instructors who were interested in:
 - Mentoring/coaching another instructor in an instructional area in which they were particularly strong, and/or
 - Receive coaching/mentoring by a peer in a particular area of instructionMentors were chosen with expertise in specific areas of instruction. Protégés were chosen on the basis of an available mentor with expertise in the identified area of teaching. Pairs were matched, considering topic, region, time, level and availability.
2. **Orientation:** Both mentors and protégés attended an orientation meeting to prepare for the partnerships. The orientation addressed the concepts of protégées and mentors, effective peer mentoring, and considerations of objective achievement, schedule, lesson plans, observation, conscious listening, and experience sharing.
3. **Observation** (by protégé): The protégé observed the mentor modelling the target teaching activity/approach in the mentor's class and had an opportunity to ask questions. A supply instructor taught the protégé's class while he/she was observing the mentor's class.
4. **Observation and Feedback** (by mentor): The mentor observed the protégé (in the protégé's class) putting into practice the selected aspect of instruction, and provided feedback.

Following the process, each pair attended a debriefing session.

What were the results?

The benefits were mutual. Protégée and mentors were able to say that their perspectives were expanded, they gained new knowledge and mentoring was considered a value-added relationship for them.

FACILITATING FACTORS

- A belief in the value of sharing expertise among instructors
- Funding support dedicated to the initiative
- A partnership between the TDSB and the union based on a shared commitment to the project goals
- A process and methodology that guided the project

Contact information: Andrea Mesa, ESL Program Officer
Toronto District School Board; Email: Andrea.mesa@tdsb.on.ca

An ESL Literacy circle

A recognized need among instructors employed by the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) for support in teaching literacy inspired an “ESL Literacy circle” that met monthly for five months, for 75–90 minutes each time. Initially, readings helped spark the discussions, which eventually led to a highly productive and shared understanding of new approaches to support learners.

How does it work?

A session at TESL Canada⁶⁰ on how to create an ESL Literacy circle, coupled with staff interest in the area, led to the establishment of an ESL Literacy circle for OCDSB instructors. The circle of 16–18 instructors met outside of work hours at a central location. Meetings generally started at 4 pm and lasted for one to two hours. While it was mainly ESL Literacy instructors who were interested, some instructors from Literacy and Basic Skills also joined. Readings about ESL Literacy, suggested by the TESL Canada session, were copied and distributed to all participants. The discussion of these readings initially helped spark discussions about ESL literacy and effective pedagogy. As the sessions progressed, the focus moved from the readings to questions raised by the instructors themselves, such as how to better prepare learners for entry-level positions in the workforce and how to assess and show learner progress more effectively.

What are the results?

This professional learning circle was well-received: as the Education Officer states, “[Staff] just love hearing each other, learning from each other, and they like being able to express themselves with administration hearing... And then, having heard, maybe we could affect some changes.” A key outcome of the learning circle was increased knowledge of literacy pedagogy, including raising instructors’ awareness of the potential benefits of building oral skills into a literacy program. Group members also discussed strategies and program options (such as LBS and other programs) to which ESL Literacy learners could transition to prepare for entry into the workplace.

FACILITATING FACTORS

- Shared staff interest in a particular topic
- A varied group with depth and breadth of experience, including some instructors with 30+ years of literacy experience
- A comfortable tone where participants felt comfortable talking, without fear of criticism
- A willingness to examine common placement practices with an open mind

Contact information: Julie Newlands, Education Officer,
Ottawa Carleton District School Board; julie.newlands@ocdsb.ca

⁶⁰ The original session was facilitated at TESL Canada by Bow Valley College in Banff, Calgary in 2009.

A conference sharing forum

At the Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services (PICS) LINC program, a forum was created to ensure that new knowledge gained from the TESL Ontario conference could be shared in a way that would spark its movement into the classroom, where it can directly impact learners.

How does it work?

Staff at PICS are encouraged to participate in professional dialogue on a regular basis, for example by sharing new resources, best practices, or anything “outstanding” that they think would be useful to others. Funding to create a forum for this sharing was facilitated by a previous LINC contract, which allowed for paid time for instructors to meet for 45 minutes every month. The TESL Ontario conference was the particular focus of a meeting in which instructors were asked to give a brief summary of the workshops they had attended. One instructor on the team recalled: “That was a very, very good activity, because we could attend, let’s say, four or five workshops a day, and the other colleagues attended another four or five workshops. And then we shared the outcome of each and [especially] the more interesting ones. That was a really good follow-up discussion.” Handouts from all sessions were also copied and distributed to all interested instructors.

What are the results?

At one of the sharing sessions, the presentation by one PICS instructor inspired the other instructors to get involved in a new initiative. The instructor presented information on a TESL Ontario workshop she had attended on how to establish a portable school library using a cart. When she presented the idea of the portable library, other instructors saw the potential benefits for their own learners. One of these benefits was that for each two-month period, two learners would be the assistant librarians, a position for which they would need to apply formally, allowing them to gain experience in employment applications and volunteerism. As a group, the instructors donated books to support the initiative. Spreading the word in advance of an open house led to the donation of dozens of books, expanding the collection. Interestingly, when the instructors’ colleagues at the agency’s other location heard about this new initiative, they, too, started their own portable library for learners.

FACILITATING FACTORS

- Dedicated, paid time for instructors to share their professional knowledge and resources
- A focus on using the knowledge gained by individual instructors at the TESL Ontario conference to benefit learners
- Enthusiasm on the part of instructors to pick up on an initiative that is suited to the context
- A supportive coordinator
- Creative use of learner volunteerism to sustain the activity and provide experience that benefits them in various ways.

Contact information: Ilona Sandor, LINC Instructor,
Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, Scarborough; isandor2003@yahoo.com.
For more information on the library project contact Christine Cousins; ccousins@polycultural.org.

Going high-tech by sharing expertise

Recognizing their clients' interest in technology, Skills for Change (SfC) looked for avenues to support its instructors' technology-related skills and needs. This entailed encouraging the transfer of technology-related knowledge from the TESL Ontario conference to the classroom as well as forming a new Information Communications and Technology (ICT) Group at the agency.

How does it work?

SfC recognized that its clients' profile was changing: among other characteristics, there was a shift in expectations regarding technology and its use in the classroom. As the coordinator observed, "Technology and social media are where we've got to move—we'll lag if we don't."

In order to facilitate the adoption of technology in the classroom, the coordinator encourages instructors to share technology-related expertise with each other, such as the expertise they gain from TESL Ontario conference sessions. Instructors are also encouraged to identify their technology-related learning needs, so that the coordinator can support those needs. In addition, a previous executive director recognized the potential in some of the current employees to take a leadership role in using technology and to help bring the agency to the forefront. After reviewing the résumés of all employees and identifying those with a background in the use of technology, she shifted them into new roles as members of the ICT Group, an informal short-term group established to "get the ball rolling" on technology and to support employees on the implementation and use of key technologies at SfC.

FACILITATING FACTORS

- A vision of the agency at the forefront of technology
- A creative review of the résumés of existing staff, volunteers and former clients to bring together a dynamic group with a shared skill set
- Existing infrastructure, including a computer lab, where staff have access to explore learning interests
- A flexible coordinator who encourages instructors to expand their IT skills
- A belief in the value of sharing expertise and capitalizing on the knowledge of instructors

What are the results?

Some examples of key technologies explored and adopted at SfC include LCD projectors and laptops in the classroom, Google Chrome, Google Docs, cloud computing, and the memberships of SfC in a number of social media sites, including LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.

Contact information: Rose A. Smith, Coordinator, CIC Program, Skills for Change, Toronto; smith@skillsforchange.org.

A shared Curriculum and Training Coordinator position

A collaborative program planning model in Peel–Halton supports a full-time Curriculum and Training Coordinator (CTC), who currently supports the professional development and resource needs of over 250 instructors across 23 LINC language training providers in the Peel–Halton region. Services include workshops, a centralized resource library, a four-part induction program for new instructors, and non-evaluative observation.

How does it work?

The Curriculum and Training Coordinator (CTC) position has existed in some form in the Peel–Halton region for over 15 years. Citizenship and Immigration Canada funds the position through the Centre for Education and Training in order to support the local language training community. For instructors in Halton–Peel, having access to this staff person means they can receive “observation for support,” which is separate from their performance evaluations. An instructor can initiate an observation, or a coordinator can request that the CTC observe the instructor. In the latter case, the CTC may not know the reason for the observation. Recommendations may include an instructor shadowing another instructor for learning purposes, resources from the Resource Centre, or the CTC working one-on-one to support the instructor. The CTC also coordinates workshops: in many cases, multiple sessions of the same workshop are offered over the course of the year in order to ensure access for all interested instructors. Recent topics include the CLB and portfolios. In addition, an optional four-part induction program is offered to all new instructors.

What are the results?

The current CTC comments on how instructors respond to her observation visits: *“I think that because it’s non-evaluative—they receive it nicely....[This is] observation for support....One of the things that I mention when I go in is that sometimes it’s just very helpful to see their lesson through another lens...I am that other lens.”*

In an informal survey at one Peel location, instructors identified the following benefits of having a coordinator:

- Having up-to-date information on new learning and teaching techniques
- Having a go-to person for questions and concerns about the LINC curriculum and CLB assessments
- Having someone to organize workshops or meetings for instructors to share ideas
- Having someone to provide a consistent message regarding teaching standards

FACILITATING FACTORS

- An innovative cross-regional partnership that allows for a shared position to support a larger number of instructors (approximately 250)
- Regular meetings between all LINC Coordinators in the region to facilitate communication across the numerous programs and make optimal use of the partnership
- A strong resource centre where instructors in need of further information on topics of interest can conduct research or be referred

Contact information: Lesline Smikle, Curriculum and Training Coordinator, Centre for Education & Training, Mississauga; lsmikle@tcet.com.

“Working workshops” to produce classroom materials



When a program supervisor asked instructors at one location how she could best support them, their response was “Give us time!” This was the origin of “working workshops,” in which each instructor sets an objective and works to produce materials for his or her own classroom.

How does it work?

When one Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) program supervisor asked instructors at one of the sites she was supporting and supervising how she could best support them, they responded, “Give us time!” They meant that they would like some time to reflect on and integrate the information they had acquired at a recent workshop on CLB assessment into their own classroom practices. The supervisor wondered if and how release time could be arranged for this without reducing classroom time for learners. She approached the site manager, who coordinated the scheduling of presentations (by settlement staff) on settlement-related topics for learners so that instructors could attend a “working workshop” together at the instructional site.

A two-hour period of release time was organized for the instructors, and the supervisor facilitated the session. Before the session, participants were given an information package with a rationale for the workshop, some optional reading material on assessment suggestions for workshop activities. Each participant was asked to write a workshop objective and a workplan. At the end of the session they were asked to write a brief personal evaluation to assess how well they met their objective. As the topic was related to the recent workshop on CLB-based assessment, the goals were all related to assessment of CLB outcomes in their classes. The instructors were grouped according to the CLB levels they taught so they could share ideas and support each other’s work throughout the session.

What are the results?

As the supervisor observes here, the two-hour working workshops were quite successful: “Instructors felt it was time well spent....Each instructor was able to take back to the classroom whatever they had accomplished. This model has the benefit of improving both staff morale and classroom practice.” Lessons learned from implementing these workshops include providing structure and focus to help ensure there are concrete products at the end of the time together.

FACILITATING FACTORS

- A keen request from staff and a desire to respond
- An understanding of the potential benefits of providing time to instructors to integrate the information gained about assessment from a recent CLB assessment workshop
- Willingness on the part of administrators to problem-solve and respond creatively to the request for paid release time

Contact information: Joanne Hincks, Program Consultant,
Toronto Catholic District School Board; joanne.hincks@tcdsb.org.

A Resource and Volunteer Coordinator position

A full-time position consisting of half-time resource support to instructors and half-time volunteer coordination in Durham region provides job-embedded support to instructors in multiple areas. Having the position filled by an experienced ESL/LINC instructor who has taught a variety of levels, among other factors, helps make it a success.

How does it work?

Originally through the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), the LINC contract for Durham Continuing Education (of the Durham District School board) received a funding boost that enabled the program to create a position that provided resource support and volunteer coordination. The volunteer coordinator component of the position involves the screening of all volunteers (approximately 30) and their placement in LINC classes. The resource component of the position focuses on supporting instructors and includes a variety of responsibilities and related activities, such as library, resources, mentoring, team teaching support, orientation to new materials and new computer programs, support with assessment, and a teacher induction program (for new hires). Among the approximately 20 teachers in the program, the resource person functions as a non-judgmental assistant, and can observe and make suggestions to support an instructor's learning. According to the department head, part of what makes this kind of relationship possible is that "the teachers trust her." And this is at least in part thanks to her approach: "She would go into a class, and rather than sitting at the back, observing, she would become part of the class....She's in and out of the classrooms all the time to see that the teachers are well-supported, and if she sees anything going on, and she thinks a suggestion from her would assist the teacher in making it better, then she'll do that."

What are the results?

According to Janet McDonald, who currently holds the position, the dual nature of her position benefits instructors: "[Someone might come to me and say,] 'I've got this student in my class and her writing skills are really, really low compared to everybody else, so what can I do?' So, I can either pull out the resources that might be appropriate or find a volunteer [to help with extra support for that learner]."

FACILITATING FACTORS

- Funding set aside to support professional development
- A highly qualified person with excellent people skills for the position
- An approach to ongoing observation and support that is participatory and built on trust
- A support position that combines knowledge of both traditional and volunteer resources

Contact information: Monica McClure, Department Head, Language Programs, Durham Continuing Education, Oshawa; mcclure_monica@durham.edu.on.ca.

A goal setting process

The St. Louis Adult Learning & Continuing Education Centres LINC program takes a creative approach to job-embedded PD, including facilitating annual individual goal-setting by instructors. In addition, questions amongst instructors about how best to support literacy learners led to a site visit with another provider in Guelph.

How does it work?

Goal-setting: The initial instructor staff meeting in September sets the stage for an annual reflective goal-setting process that encourages instructors to set goals that are relevant to their classroom practice. The LINC program manager describes how the process works: “This year, they were to look at their own classrooms: I gave them a checklist containing many different aspects of the classroom, whether management or lesson planning, and they were to pick three things they wanted to set a goal for, and give me some details.” Towards the end of the teaching year, instructors revisit their goals and write a reflective report. While previous budgets had allowed for instructors to share and discuss their goal-setting with a colleague/partner on paid time, currently team meetings are used for this sharing.

Overall, instructors are positive about the goal-setting activity. The program manager says a number of them have told her about things that have changed in their classrooms as a result of the goal-setting.

External site visit: The program manager was aware of instructors’ concerns for how best to support “struggling students” in LINC Literacy. When the program manager met an administrator from a Guelph LINC provider with an established literacy program at a Waterloo Region LINC Community meeting, the two discussed the concerns about LINC literacy learners. They came up with the idea to arrange for the instructors visit the established Guelph literacy program to share practices.

What are the results?

The program manger reports that the visit and discussions with the Guelph literacy instructors “was an amazing day for the instructors... In some ways it validated what they already are doing, and in some ways it gave them new ideas, and supported some of the changes that we wanted.”

FACILITATING FACTORS

- A strong belief on the part of administration in the value of reflective practice and goal-setting for instructors
- A willingness to find creative ways to continue supporting PD initiatives despite funding reductions
- An openness in addressing instructor concerns
- A belief in the value of sharing expertise and experience with other language training providers

Contact information: Colleen Boehmer, LINC Program Manager,
St. Louis Adult Learning & Continuing Education Centres, Kitchener; colleen.boehmer@wcdsb.ca.

Experimenting with a model of class organization

Grand Erie Learning Alternatives instructors piloted an approach to organizing classes where learners are grouped into classes based on their listening/speaking and reading/writing levels.

How does it work?

A session at a 2011 CESBA conference inspired dramatic changes at Grand Erie Learning Alternatives. When the LINC/ESL coordinator heard about an innovative program plan that had been implemented in Barrie, she was interested in trying it at her locations in Brantford and Simcoe. The innovation involved changing from a traditional model of one instructor teaching one class for a full day to a model in which instructors taught more than one group of learners who were grouped into skill-based classes according to their listening/speaking or reading/writing CLB levels.

Initially, instructors recognized the potential benefits but were concerned that some learners might feel less supported without one instructor as their main teacher. A conference call with the Barrie instructors inspired them to develop their own version of the plan, where learners would spend part of each day with their main instructor in an integrated skills class, and part of their day in specific skills classes. The Barrie instructors were enthusiastic about the new model, but strongly recommended some weekly planning time for instructors. Instructors at Grand Erie agreed to pilot the approach, with the understanding that if it did not go well, they could go back to the traditional model. The LINC/ESL coordinator consulted with the CIC program officer and obtained approval to offer a one-hour “open period” for learners on Fridays. During this hour, instructors could plan for learners to do an activity independently, such as use the computer lab or participate in a conversation circle with a settlement worker. This provides instructors with some shared planning time.

What are the results?

After a few months, instructors were pleased with the new delivery model, and decided not to return to the previous one. The coordinator comments on the positive impact the change has had: “We’re keeping our learners longer [in the day]. They [like] it very much. We’re seeing an increase in attendance.” In addition, she notes that students are getting to know a wider variety of other students because they’re not always in the same group. She also observes that teachers are enjoying talking to each other, and she feels that the conference call with the Barrie instructors was key in helping to make the transition, as it allowed for honest dialogue about the benefits and challenges of the program shift.

FACILITATING FACTORS

- A “can-do” attitude on the part of the LINC/ESL Coordinator, who needs to spearhead the innovation but also allow the team to adopt it on a trial basis at first
- A belief in the value of sharing expertise with other language training providers
- Commitment on the part of instructors to adapt to the change and give it a genuine chance to work
- Support from the CIC program officer for an “open period” for learners in order to give instructors some necessary planning time

Contact information: Marci Hughes, LINC/ESL Coordinator, Grand Erie Learning Alternatives, Brantford; marci.hughes@granderie.ca.

A peer coaching model: the PD Partner initiative

Through two-year funding provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Toronto Catholic District School Board developed a model of collaborative peer coaching, titled a PD (professional development) Partner. The funding supported a number of activities, including:

- Researching best practices in job-embedded professional development
- Developing a framework to guide the model
- Developing two publications to support the implementation of the model
- Developing a specialized training course
- Training 25 LINC instructors to become “PD Partners”
- Funding a three-month implementation period across Ontario during which the trained PD Partners developed PD partnerships with LINC instructors in their organizations

How did it work?

Following an email call and information package to all LINC language training provider organizations, several administrators nominated experienced instructors from their staff to receive PD Partner training. Following a ten-week PD Partner training course, the instructors were released from their positions for one day per week (for a three-month period) to implement the PD Partner model in their organizations. The PD Partners followed the implementation processes detailed in this publication.

During the implementation period, the PD Partners reported monthly on their activities, keeping the identities partnering instructors confidential. Typically, their partnerships involved three to five classroom visits with an instructor. The PD Partners also received support on Moodle-based forums, in which other PD Partners and the project staff responded to requests for collaboration. Toward the end of the implementation period, anonymous evaluation surveys were administered to PD Partners, participating instructors, and administrators.

What are the results?

- 26 LINC instructors completed the fall 2012 PD Partner training course (from 24 organizations across Ontario).
- Over a three-month implementation period ending March 2013, 85 information sessions were delivered to 487 instructors.
- 166 PD partnerships were formed.

PD Partners reported high rates of satisfaction with both the PD Partner training course and the PD Partner model. All the PD Partners said that they would participate as PD partners again if offered the chance.

More than 95% of instructor respondents rated the partnerships as either Very Helpful or Helpful (20%), and reported on a variety of changes or additions to their teaching that were inspired by the partnerships.

Over 90% of administrator respondents reported that they would participate again if given the opportunity.

FACILITATING FACTORS

- Funding for the initiative
- A methodology informed by research and best practices
- Clear implementation and reporting processes
- Language training provider organizations willing to implement the model

Contact information: Anne-Marie Kaskens, Project Manager, PD Framework Project 2011-2013
Toronto Catholic District School Board; annemarie.kaskens@tcdsb.org

References

- Center for Applied Linguistics. (2010). *Framework for Quality Professional Development for Practitioners Working With Adult English Language Learners*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Center for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2005). Teacher Education. *Inside Language*, 11. Retrieved from www.language.ca/newsletters/11_05_fall/teachers.htm
- CESBA (Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators). (2010). Adult non-credit ESL/FSL/CL learner survey: 2010 survey report (Toronto Catholic District School Board). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Government of Ontario. Retrieved from http://www.tcdsb.org/adulted/research_files/l2009_2010_learner_demographic_report/Toronto_Catholic_District_School_Board.pdf
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada Evaluation Division. (2010). Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Corley, M. A. (2003). The evolution of quality professional development. *CALProgress*, 2, 4–5. Retrieved from <http://www.calpro-online.org/announce/docs/CalProGressMay03-vol2.pdf>
- Croft, A., Coggeshall, J. G., Dolan, M., Powers, E., & Killian, J. (2010). Job-embedded professional development: What it is, who is responsible, and how to get it done well. Issue Brief, April 2010. National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center, National Staff Development Council. Retrieved from <http://www.tqsource.org/publications/JEPD%20Issue%20Brief.pdf>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R.C., Andree, A., Richardson, N., and Orphanos, S. (2009). The School Redesign Network at Stanford University. Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad. New York: National Staff Redesign Network.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2007). *Reflective language teaching: From research to practice*. London, UK: Continuum.
- Howard Barton & Associates. (2006). *LINCages to inclusion: Survey of the Ontario LINC program regarding learners with high needs and diverse abilities*. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- Jangles Productions–Ontario LINC Literacy Project. (2006). *An investigation of best practices in the instruction and assessment of LINC literacy learners in Ontario*. Retrieved from <http://www.jangles.ca/LINCLiteracyProject.pdf>
- Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat. (2007). *Improving student achievement in literacy and numeracy: Job-embedded professional learning*. Retrieved from The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat website: http://resources.curriculum.org/LNS/coaching/files/pdf/Improving_Achievement.pdf
- Framework for Post TESL Certificate Training Project. (2011). Research Report/Fieldtest Report. Unpublished manuscript.
- Schaetzel, K., Peyton, J. K., & Burt, M. (2007). *Professional development for adult ESL practitioners: Building capacity*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/profdev.html
- Smith, C., Hofer, J., Gillespie, M., Solomon, M., & Rowe, K. (2003). *How teachers change: A study of professional development in adult education*. (Report No. 25a). Cambridge, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/report25.pdf>
- Sparks, D., & Hirsh, S. (1997). *A new vision for staff development*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Wang, J., Odell, S. J., & Schwille, S. A. (2008). Effects of teacher induction on beginning teachers' teaching: A critical review of the literature. *Journal of teacher education*, 59, 132–152. doi: 10.1177/0022487107314002
- Wood, F. H., & Killian, J. E. (1998). Job-embedded learning makes the difference in school improvement. *Journal of Staff Development*, 19(1), 52–54.
- Zepeda, S. J. (2012). Professional development: What works. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.